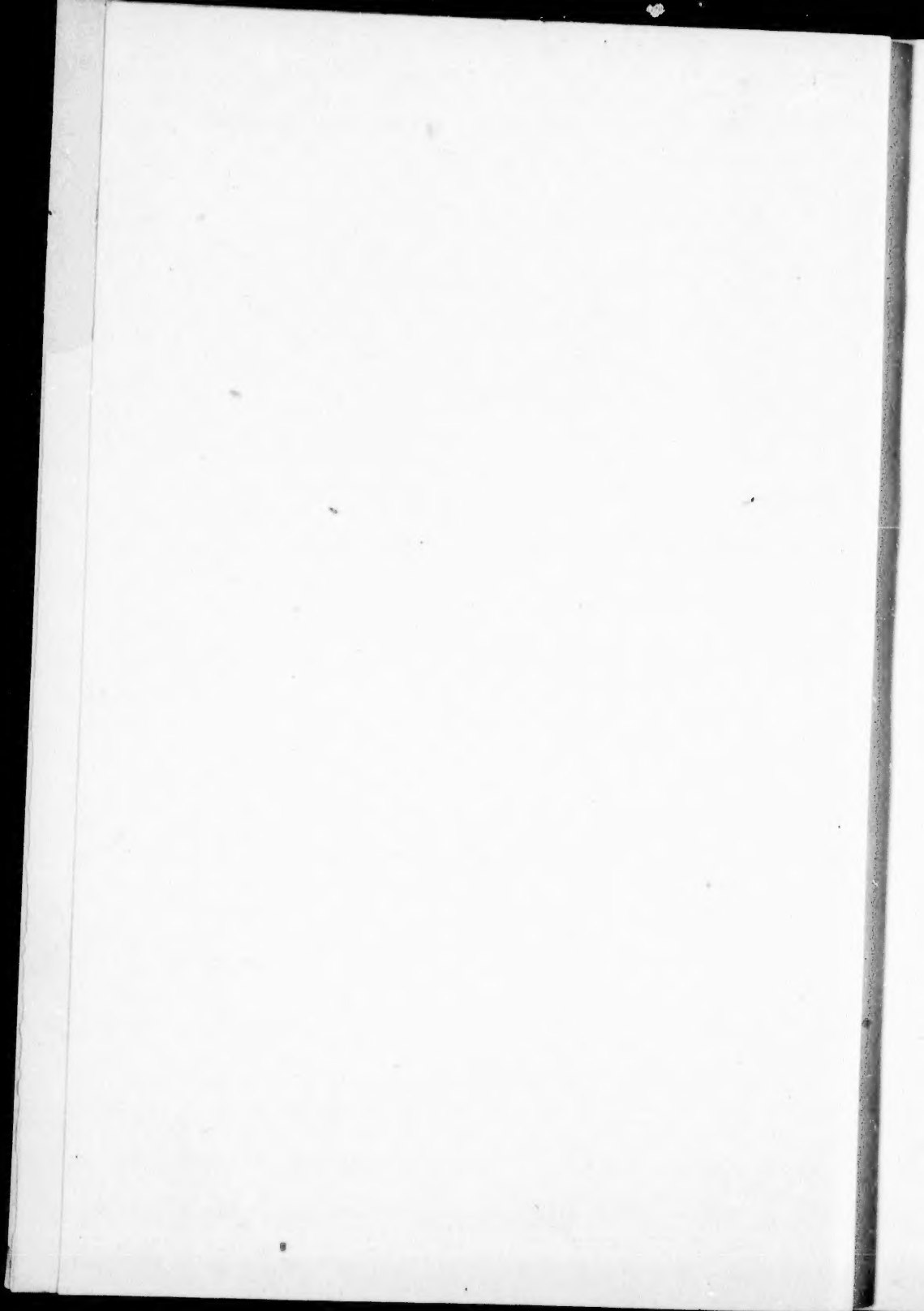




A MYSTERY.



# A MYSTERY.

BY

CARIS SIMA,

AUTHOR OF "MISSION OF LOVE," ETC.



Toronto :  
ROSE PUBLISHING COMPANY.

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1886.



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TORONTO.



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# A MYSTERY.

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## CHAPTER I.

HALLOWE'EN—THE SISTERS—AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL—THE SPIN-  
STER'S SENSE OF PROPRIETY OUTRAGED.

**T**HE autumn of 1874 was one of the most delightful seasons that the antiquated mortal, the oldest inhabitant, can remember. Summer had lingered as though loath to depart and give place to the bitter winter of 1875; but on the evening on which my tale opens the wind sighed with a complaining murmur that betokened a change; the crisp leaves hurried over the dry ground into holes and against fences, as anxious to escape the impending rain-storm that threatened destruction to their lovely tints of violet, crimson, and yellow. The sun sank behind a sullen cloud, and darkness crept slowly over the little town of Beeborough. The clock on the market tower pealed seven, and in ten minutes all

the shutters were up, and business suspended for the day. Eight,—nine,—and the streets were almost deserted,—ten,—all is still. Ten minutes later, had any interested party been on the watch, and there may have been such, dark forms might have been seen creeping in the shadows of fences and buildings; for an enemy to a peace-loving people was abroad in the shape of those miscreants who play such senseless pranks on All-Halloweve.

In a small house on Maple street there lived two maiden ladies, known to the inhabitants of Beeborough as Miss Linwood and Miss Kate Linwood. Miss Linwood had been for years an invalid, and on the evening above-mentioned was lying on a couch in a cosy, homelike little sitting-room, absorbed in the study of a medical work, through the aid of which she hoped to discover the peculiar disease by which she was afflicted, and which had baffled all the efforts put forth by the two leading physicians of Beeborough to discover. The shaded lamp that stood on a small table near by threw a softened light on a face that must once have been very attractive. The large dark eyes were very beautiful. Luxuriant brown hair was brushed smoothly back from a broad, low brow, and Helena Linwood, at thirty, might have been girlishly pretty but for the discontented lines that so often appeared about her mouth. Her face was smooth and soft as an infant's; and through five years of comparative helplessness there had been little suffering to leave its trace on a well-rounded form.

While the invalid lay poring over her book the door opened, and Kate Linwood entered with a tray whereon was laid tea for two, drew a small table before the couch,

took a seat by her sister's side, and commenced pouring out the tea.

'Kate,' said the invalid suddenly, laying down her book, 'I've found it now! I am perfectly satisfied, from the symptoms here described, that it is chronic inflammation of the stomach. In a short time the stomach will not retain any food, and then follows great suffering and death.'

'Well,' remarked Kate, coolly, 'just try this bread and butter, and a cup of tea, and if it stays down it will be proof positive that it has not yet reached a dangerous stage; and here is a fresh egg boiled just as you like it.'

The invalid smiled faintly, and took the offered food, and amidst a long rehearsal of aches and pains, real and imaginary, the evening meal came to a conclusion; the tray was removed, and from a stand near the window Kate brought a small box of mignonette and a Bourbon rose in full bloom, and placed them on the table near her sister.

This delicate attention, however, was unheeded by the invalid, who was again busied in the medical work, from which she read aloud,

'Creates great uneasiness and nervous irritability.' Then after a pause—

'There's some mistake somewhere. I may be nervous, but I'm sure I'm not irritable.'

'I think you are a little irritable at times,' responded Kate, mildly; she was much relieved to hear that what the day before had been cancer, was now only an inflammation.

'Well,' snapped the invalid, 'if you had been idle for



five years, as I have, you would be so irritable there would be no doing anything with you.'

'I am quite sure of it,' replied Kate soothingly; 'all people are irritable when they are ill, and it is usually considered a favourable sign.'

'You think I can't die while I have spirit enough to get in a temper,' retorted the invalid.

'It surely betokens a certain amount of vitality,' answered Kate with a smile, which was quickly followed by a weary sigh, as she took up the *Evening Chronicle*, and was soon lost in its perusal; and as she sits with the softened light of the lamp falling upon her, we will bring her more prominently before the reader.

She was tall and well formed, and moved with natural easy grace. There was a picturesqueness about her dress and surroundings in harmony with herself and unlike other women, which was in itself an attraction.

The sisters resembled each other but faintly; Kate had not the regular features of Helena; but what she lost in feature she gained in expression. There was a charm in her smile that was indescribable: little dimples played like sunshine flickering in shadow about her mouth and chin. Her eyes, a limpid hazel, looked into the beholder's with the fearless glance of a child: eyes from which looked a soul that thought no evil; or to which the thought of evil could never cling; eyes that were even more beautiful in sadness than in mirth, when they had a tender wistful expression in their clear depths, that irresistibly moved the soul of the gazer to tenderness: and her perfect unconsciousness of this peculiar charm rendered the attraction still greater. Kate seldom

thought of her personal appearance: her mirror told her she was plain as it does all women who depend on expression for beauty. She had at times felt this plainness painfully; in contrast with Helena's regular features, hers, she thought, were almost ugly; yet she was conscious that she must have some attraction, because people liked her.

Such was Kate Lindwood, as seen from a surface point of view; the view from which all people form impressions—some verging on the truth, some most erroneous, according as the power is given of discerning the inner motions of that most complicated of all mechanism—the human mind, which, in the case of the lady under discussion, we leave our story to develop.

After reading for some minutes, Kate turned to her sister and said, 'Listen to this, Helena,' and she read aloud, 'Our townspeople would do well to look after their signs, gates, cabbages, &c., as the Mayor and Council have neglected to pass a by-law to prevent the usual Hallowe'en depredations.'

'Is this the thirty-first?' asked Helena excitedly.

'I think so,' and Kate turned to the top of the page.

'Yes, the thirty-first of October.'

'What are we going to do?' wailed the invalid. 'The gate is sure to be taken off its hinges and laid in the ditch; or, perhaps, carried to the other end of the town. I'm sure, Kate, if you had spoken to the Mayor about it some weeks ago, as I wanted you to, something would have been done; but you always put things off, and in the end forget them.'

'Now, Nell, dear, don't work yourself into a ferment

before anything dreadful has happened, I dislike these senseless tricks just as much as you do ; but we have had little to complain of so far at the hands of these imps of darkness, who hold their revels on All-Halloweve. Two years ago they left a whisky-barrel at our door, which has served as a rain-water tank ever since ; and last year they left some heads of cabbage which I took in and cooked ; and they tasted just as nice as if I had paid five cents a-piece for them, and I shall do the same this year should they bring more, and consider them as manna dropped from heaven, as try how I might, I could never find the owner. So let each individual look after his or her own cabbage-patch,' she added with a laugh, 'if they do not wish us to be regaled on the fruits of their industry ; for I am determined to take in whatever may be brought to me this night, and treat it according to its merits.'

As Kate ceased speaking, there was distinctly heard a tap, tapping at the window.

She rose and peeped from behind the curtain, but nothing was to be seen.

'The enemy is abroad,' she remarked, as she took a chair, placed it before the fire and sat down to wait developments, while the invalid nervously entreated, 'Better keep quiet and take no notice, and they will be less likely to annoy us.'

So saying she went back to her book ; and Kate fell to dreaming, as she gazed into the bright coal fire, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes fixed in deep thoughtful expression on the flame ; a soft smile at times played on her lips, and again was chased away by a look of intense sadness and longing.

She was startled suddenly from her revery by a loud peal on the door-knocker.

‘The imps of darkness,’ suggested Helena.

‘Don’t go,’ as Kate sprang up suddenly and took up a hand lamp.

‘Of course I’ll go,’ laughed Kate. ‘Don’t I want my cabbages for to-morrow’s dinner, I haven’t bought any vegetables lately, because I felt so sure of being supplied to-night;’ and with this she walked straight to the door, and threw it wide open, and as the poet Roberts hath it, ‘All the darkness shuddered and fled back,’ and the lamp-light revealed, instead of the expected cabbages, a large basket of autumn leaves, crisp and of varied tints.

Kate laughed as she drew the basket into the room.

‘Look, Helena,’ she cried, ‘this is the best joke of the season, a basket of withered leaves; the imps are getting poetical. They evidently consider us in the “sere and yellow.”’

‘Throw them out,’ suggested Helena, who did not appear to relish this display of sentiment.

‘Oh, dear no,’ cried Kate. ‘Did I not say I would take in all things that came to me to-night, and treat them according to their merits. Some of these are lovely, and I will decorate the room with them.’

As she spoke she bent over the basket and commenced picking up the leaves and forming them in clusters. Suddenly they dropped from her hands to the floor, while the exclamation, ‘Good Heaven!’ escaped her lips, and she started back, white and trembling.

‘What is it?’ demanded the invalid in excited tones, rising from the couch; and forgetful of weakness, she

moved hurriedly forward, threw off the top covering of leaves and disclosed to view an infant child some three or four months old. The light falling full on its face awakened it, and a low wailing cry rang through the room.

Kate, who had recovered almost instantly, took the little creature in her arms, and commenced soothing it, with all the tenderness of a mother, while Helena exclaimed,

‘You should not have touched it. It should be sent to the Mayor immediately. Good Heaven, Kate! if it is found here, what will people think? They’ll never believe it was left here. I tell you it must be sent to the Mayor immediately, to see what is to be done with it. Immediately! To think that anyone should dare to leave a baby on the door-step of two unmarried women. It’s disgraceful!’ and she sank back on the sofa and sobbed hysterically.

Without a word Kate left the room, still holding the child in her arms, and returned almost immediately with a glass of wine, which she held to her lips.

‘This excitement has been too much for you, Nell, dear. Drink this and you will feel better, and we can talk this matter over, and see whether we send this babe to the Mayor.’

The invalid drank the wine, and Kate continued: ‘Now, Nell, dear, this is no doubt a most unfortunate and ridiculous affair, and all we can do is to take it coolly. Nothing can be done to-night; it is now half-past eleven. The Mayor will be asleep, and besides we have no one to send with it; you cannot go, and I am sure it would

not look well for me, at my age, to be seen out at this hour with an infant. I'd rather be found with it here.' And Kate, whom no gossip could alarm, laughed a merry little laugh.

'You take it very coolly, Kate; but I can tell you that this is not a joke at all to my taste. In a scandal-loving town like this there is no telling what will be made of it.'

Helena Lindwood had always laid much stress on the proprieties, and this was an innovation that she could not approve of; her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes had a feverish light.

'Nell,' said Kate soothingly, 'this will never do; you must try and tranquillise yourself, or you will be set back again as far as ever, and you have been so much better the past few weeks.'

'It's all very well for you to say tranquillise yourself, but I can't be tranquil under an abominable trick like this and if you had spoken to the Mayor, as I wanted you to, this never would have happened.'

'Nell,' said Kate, and there was a weary sound in her voice, 'don't you think life is hard enough without making it worse by anticipating evil. Your reputation and mine are above even the shadow of reproach; but in any case I should do what I thought was right, aye, even if the whole town were howling at our door; so try and rest in peace, while I see what is to be done with my waif; it may have been stolen and the parents may come for it to-morrow.'

This thought somewhat mollified the invalid, and she remained silent, thus giving Kate time to collect her scattered senses, and, by way of soothing the distress-

ed infant she loosed its clothes, and as she did so, there fell from the bosom of its robe a roll of bank notes and a folded paper.

Kate seized the paper, and with trembling hands unfolded it and read the following lines which had been hurriedly scrawled in pencil :

‘MISS KATE LINDWOOD.—Be as a mother to this infant, and God will bless you. Her name is Pearl. More money will be sent when required. Search the basket.’

There was no signature. Nothing to tell where it had come from. It was a leaf torn from a gentleman’s pocket book, and that was all the clew, and that told nothing.

Kate did search the basket and found there two changes of apparel, and the nursing bottle known to all mothers who rear a child by hand, as it is termed. Kate seized this modern appliance, and soon succeeded in quieting the little one, and while it lay asleep on her knee, she took up the roll of notes and counted out one hundred dollars.

‘Poor little thing,’ thought Kate ; ‘how soft and lovely you are, I wonder how your mother could have the heart to part with you,’ and she bent and laid her cheek to the pink cheek of the infant with a fond caressing movement, and as she again raised her head, the child opened its large deep blue eyes, and fixed them on her face, while a smile dimpled the baby mouth, and it stretched out two little fat arms to be taken up.

Kate clasped it to her bosom, and paced up and down the room excitedly as she muttered ‘I never heard of it, never, why does this thought haunt me so ?’

Her sister meanwhile had fallen into an uneasy slumber, from which she did not awaken till Kate had undressed her infant charge, and laid it in her own bed; when suddenly opening her eyes, she exclaimed :

‘ Oh Kate ! I’ve had such a dreadful dream ! ’ Then as recollection came back, she cried, ‘ No it was not a dream I remember it all now. What are we going to do ? ’

‘ We will see in the morning,’ replied Kate, as she assisted the invalid to her room, and did not leave her until she again fell asleep, when she stole noiselessly to her own bed, and taking the infant in her arms, murmured, ‘ I shall keep you, my Pearl ; for the sake of your blue eyes, I shall keep you.








## CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY OF LINDWOOD—LOVERS' VOWS, AND WHAT THEY ARE  
WORTH—A WOMAN-FIEND—A TRUE WOMAN'S LOVE.

**C**HARLES LINDWOOD, the father of Helena and Kate, had lived many years in Beeborough. He came to the town with a small capital, and by lucky speculations amassed a considerable fortune ; so that in the days of their early girlhood his daughters had never known a wish ungratified. In later years an unlucky venture swallowed up the fortune. Lindwood's constitution, always delicate, could not survive the shock ; and three years before my tale opens his remains were laid in the church-yard of Beeborough. His wife, who was devotedly attached to him, followed him in less than six months ; and his daughters were left with barely sufficient means to procure the common necessities—the elder a confirmed invalid, the younger with a brave true heart, whose inner murmurings were suppressed as she nerved herself to fight the battle of life, and add to their small income by various fancy works, learned as a pastime in the days of their prosperity, but which became



irksome in the extreme, when driven to labour by the iron hand of necessity. Kate was five years younger than her sister, though to some she might have appeared older, as she was, practically speaking, the head of the house, as far as their arrangements, financial or otherwise, were concerned, her sister's time being chiefly taken up with the study of her ailments, and weak lamentations over the trials of life generally, and her own hard lot in particular; and Kate would listen to her, sometimes patiently, and soothingly, sometimes rebukingly; and sometimes quizzically, as we have seen, according to the mood she was in; for she was not a perfect woman, and acknowledged to her inner self, that she had many faults and weaknesses that it would be well for her to conquer. When a child, her temperament ran to extremes; she was either at the highest pinnacle of bliss, or in the deepest depths of woe. As a woman this peculiarity became somewhat modified, and as she usually buried her sorrows where no eye could see them; to the casual observer her life appeared one long period of brightness; though some say she had never been quite the same since that year's visit to C——, when rumours of her engagement to the son of her father's old friend, John Hargrave, had spread through Beeborough; but four years had passed since her return, and nothing had come of it; and the wise ones shook their heads and looked wiser still; it was all they could do, as they were in ignorance of what transpired after her return, though lively imaginations assisted them greatly; and Kate could have aided them still more, had she told how she met Leslie Hargrave in that distant city. How she had been attracted by his deep blue magnetising

eyes. How from the first hour of their meeting she had set him apart from all other men : he had appeared so gifted, so noble. How he had followed her like her shadow, till they became inseparable. How in that one year she had given him the great deep love of her passionate heart. She could have told of their parting vows as they stood upon the verandah one glorious moonlight night; and as hand clasped in hand, and eyes raised to the moon as she rode high in heaven, he said,

‘My darling, we are to be separated for one year, and I want you to give me a proof of your love; every time that the moon is at the full at the hour of eleven in the evening, will you come forth, no matter where you may be, and look at her; that our eyes may be bent at the same time on the one object, that our communion of soul may be more complete. Promise me you will.’

‘I promise.’

She spoke slowly and solemnly; awed, and troubled by something, she did not know what. He held her a little from him and looked at her sweet face in the moonlight.

‘Darling, I could never doubt you; or I would not, even now, let you go.’

‘Nor could I doubt you,’ she replied, then added with a laugh: ‘at least not while you are in your right mind.’

She never could tell why she said it, or why she laughed, such a weird laugh. Was it prophetic? Was it the outcome of a feeling inspired by an incident that had occurred a week before the evening we mention? They were at a large social gathering where Kate had attracted much attention. She was not, as we have said, beautiful, but there was something in her face that was beyond

mere physical loveliness; an expression of truth, purity and fresh girlishness, that was captivating to men who were sick of the conventional ball-room beauty; and as Leslie noticed the admiring glances cast upon her, he became alarmed at the thought of losing her, and crossing the room to where she was in animated conversation with a group of ladies and gentlemen, he joined them for a few moments; then drawing her arm through his, he led her to the verandah, when he began hurriedly,

‘Kate, I had dared to hope that you are fond of me, even as I am fond of you, is it not so? Make me perfectly happy to-night by putting it in words. Say, “Leslie I love you.”’ There was a slight pause. ‘Say it,’ he repeated with imperative eagerness. Kate raised her true sweet eyes to his, then dropped them again and murmured in a half frightened tone.

‘Leslie, I love you.’

He caught her hand and kissed it; he would have drawn her to his bosom, and told her it was her resting place forever, but he dared not.

At this moment the figure of a woman emerged from a screen of Virginia creeper near them, and looking straight in Kate’s face, with a light laugh passed through the long French window into the drawing room. Kate shivered and asked.

‘Who is she, Leslie?’

‘Selina Vincent,’ was his unmoved remark. ‘She is considered the belle of the city.’

Here the strains of one of Strauss waltzes floated out on the air.

‘One waltz before we part, Kate, my darling,’ cried the

happy Leslie, as he led her to the ball-room. While Kate glided round the room supported by her lover, many eyes followed her, and words of open admiration fell from lips long unaccustomed to give voice to such a feeling, that welled from hearts sated with the empty attractions of fashionable women, and one, Selina Vincent, sat by and listened. Never before had her reign been disputed, and a feeling of hot anger and hate throbbed in her heart against the unconscious girl, who was the cause of what she considered the slight put upon herself.

She had met Leslie Hargrave several times, but had never considered him a worthy object on which to exert her unrivalled powers of fascination; but now, when she knew this girl who had dared to rival her,—loved him, she saw the way to her punishment by making a breach between them. She made a vow that the light in that face should fade with weeping, and that young life be blighted with grieving over her shattered idol before many weeks passed by. She knew her own power and she intended to use it.

Several times as Kate floated round the room she saw Selina Vincent, and each time felt as if the glance of an evil-eye had fallen upon her; at last overcome with nervous excitement she cried,—

‘Take me away, Leslie, I don’t like Miss Vincent to look at me; I suppose it’s foolish, but she has the look of a bird of prey. Women don’t reason, you know—they have instincts—and my instincts tell me she is dangerous.’

Leslie laughed a happy laugh.

'My darling, she is too small to be dangerous; she is not much more than half your size, my stately Kate.'

'You may laugh,' responded Kate; 'but I cannot. Take me home, Leslie, I do not want to see her again; I don't want her to look at me.'

'Well, she shall not see you; come this way, our carriage is at the door even now. You are tired, love of mine; her look will not disturb you to-morrow.'

'I do not even wish to see her face again,' cried Kate excitedly, as she sprang into the carriage. 'I have felt ever since she came stealthily out from behind the creeper on the verandah, as though an evil thing were near me. I have this feeling; it may be wicked, but I cannot help it.'

'It seems very strange,' said Leslie; 'she looks inoffensive enough; I never took much notice of her, she is not my style,' with a look at Kate that spoke volumes; 'but I know she is considered very lovely.'

'By men,' supplemented Kate, 'the greater number of whom never look beyond the surface.'

'Now Kate, you are hard upon us poor mortals.'

'I don't mean you,' said Kate shyly. 'Of course, if you had not been different from other men, I should not——' she paused and blushed.

'Should not what?' asked Leslie smiling in her face.

'Should not dislike you so,' laughed Kate.

With this their conversation took a lighter turn, and by the time they reached the shelter of the Hargrave homestead, Kate had almost forgotten Miss Vincent. A week later she left the city for her home in Beeborough, and for some weeks letters passed between them; letters

that showed such close communion of soul, that it would seem impossible the link could be severed, either here or hereafter; and then came one that Kate could not understand; it was so strange, so cold; although it commenced as usual 'Dearest Kate,' and ended 'ever yours, Leslie,' and then for six weeks they ceased altogether, when one day she received the following—

'95 RIVER STREET,  
C———

'Forget me; blot me from your memory forever. I am a wretch, a dastard, too contemptible even for your pity. I was married three days ago to Selina Vincent. I was mad. Your words have come too true.

'LESLIE.'

Kate had felt that something was wrong, and had been very miserable; but she was not prepared for anything like this. She stared at the ill-written scrawl as if she had been turned to stone; then raising her eyes upwards, she gasped in almost inarticulate accents, 'Oh, Father in heaven, grant that he may live to feel as I do now.'

Then followed a deep sobbing; but not a tear came to her burning eyes.

'Oh! would that I had died before this doom came upon me,' she moaned; 'or that he had died true to me, that I might have loved him still. What am I to do with my life now? Will I become hard and sceptical and doubt the existence of truth and honour? Will my heart become like an arid desert—incapable of human love, a withered, blasted thing?'

She started with horror at the thought, and cried

'Not that! not that! Ah! merciful Father, leave my heart capable of loving, though everything else be taken from me,' and she fell on her knees in an agony of supplication, and there she was found some hours afterwards rigid and insensible. Then followed a long illness, of which she remembered little, and which was succeeded by her father's financial difficulty, and the illness and death of both her parents, as has been already seen.

On the evening of the day of her mother's funeral, after her invalid sister had retired to rest, a letter was placed in her hands. She tore it slowly open, without looking at the address, and as one in a dream, she read the following lines :

' 95 RIVER STREET,

' C———

' MY DARLING,—For I must still call you so, I know all your trouble ; and oh how I wish that I could comfort you ! No woman has held or ever will hold your place in my heart. I was mad, my darling, mad ; but my infatuation was short-lived ; three days of wedded life restored me to my senses, and to tortures worse than those suffered by fiends. Sometimes I feel I must lose my reason in thinking of all I have lost. My darling, you who were so tender, so pitiful to all living things, do not turn your heart utterly from me, but keep your old promise made in the moonlight, and through the dreary years to come let me feel that you have forgiven me. It will not be wrong or I would not ask it. I was tempted of the devil, and I fell, and have placed a barrier between us, here on earth ; but in heaven all will be different. Our love was unlike the love of other mortals, and it cannot die ; I feel it cannot. Though I may never see your pure, beautiful face again, I shall carry this love with me to the grave ; and you, whom I have wronged so deeply, will not, as you read these lines, taunt me, even in thought,



with having been faithless, for you know I was mad ! mad ! not faithless, no, not faithless, that could never be, my darling, never.

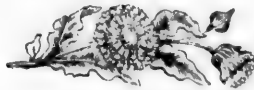
‘ LESLIE.’

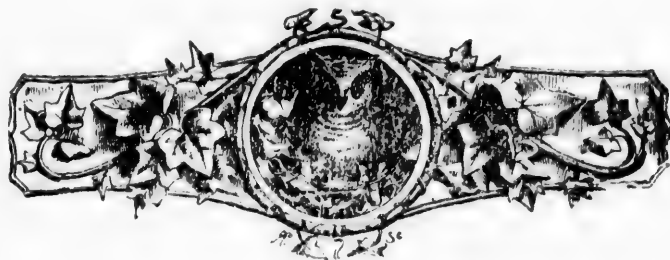
Kate read this letter over and over again, then she pressed her cheek fondly upon it, and as she did so an unearthly light trembled in her dark eyes ; a soft smile played upon her lips, and at that moment Kate Lindwood’s face was as the face of an angel. A weight seemed lifted from her spirit ; silently she knelt beside her bed, and a great feeling of thanksgiving welled up from her heart as she murmured : ‘ Oh ! I thank Thee, I thank Thee, that Thou hast left me the power of loving ; and now, O Father, watch over me always ; and keep Thy child’s heart pure and holy : day and night watch over me, that I may always incline to Thy will and walk in Thy way.’

She rose from her knees with a sense of happiness she had never known before, she took a low chair, sat down before the open window, and looked upon the night. At this moment the moon that had been obscured by a black cloud suddenly burst forth and glittered with surpassing brilliancy as she floated into a space of pure ether, then passed behind another cloud, and again peeped forth. Typical of human life, thought Kate, dark and bright, dark and bright to the end, and how patiently we pass through the dark, when we are looking forward to the light.

While she thus mused, the moon, that had again passed behind a cloud, burst forth into a glory of light, and as she did so, Kate, for the first time, noticed that she was

at the full. A strong sense of spiritual presence was upon her. She drew out her watch,—it was the hour of eleven. ‘My love, my love,’ she murmured, ‘you are thinking of me now. I feel as though you were with me. I almost fancy I hear you breathe. Leslie, do you see the same bright spots that I am looking at? the same mountains and valleys? Oh! you are with me now, Leslie, my love, my love.’ Then her eyes went beyond into the blue vault of heaven as she prayed: ‘Father, guard thy child.’ Far into the small hours she sat watching the moon and thinking; and every little while a prayer or a thanksgiving was wafted up to heaven for what she considered hair-breadth escapes from calamity or special blessings. There was no anger in her heart now; but a great pitying, heaven-born love for the man who had betrayed her trust, and whom she knew was paying the penalty of his wrong-doing in passionate self-upbraiding and bitterness of soul. ‘The peace that passeth understanding’ was hers, and when she sought her bed she slept the sweet refreshing sleep of a tired child.





### CHAPTER III.

THE FIEND SUCCEEDS—ONE FOOL MORE—LESLIE'S REPENTANCE—  
THE ELOPEMENT.

**HE**LINA VINCENT was below the medium height, and beautifully formed. Her movements had the slow, soft, peculiar grace of the leopard, and her eyes were of that colour so rare, so beautiful, and so treacherous, the nearest approach seen in the human being to the eye of these prowlers of the jungle, an orange yellow, with large black pupils. These were fringed with long, dark lashes, that were capable of giving them any variety of expression, from the glare of hate to the most enslaving look of love. Her hair was light brown, with a tawny shade running through it, and rippled in luxuriant waves from a broad white brow. Her complexion was fair and a brilliant colour burned on either cheek. There were some hard lines about her mouth when seen in repose; but she never was seen in repose by those whom she wished to conquer. She had beautiful teeth, and an arch, fascinating smile usually parted her lips just sufficiently to show them. She was a beautiful compound of nature and of art. She met Leslie Hargrave often

after his betrothed had left the city; and she continued attending every entertainment where she knew she would meet him, and she brought the whole battery of her attractions to bear upon him with too sure effect. At first he was curious to learn what Kate found amiss in her, and purposely sought her society. On closer inspection he found her charming; and she alluded to his engagement to Kate and praised her beauty till he was enchanted with her sweetness; then she envied those who could win love, and lamented her own inability to do so, and she looked so fair and guileless that he was perfectly fascinated. He was thrown into her society daily, and daily she practised her arts upon him, till he was bewildered. He thought he sought her to hear the praises of his love, and knew not the spell she was weaving round him. Her fascinating eyes lured him wherever she moved. One day when he called upon her, as it had become his wont to do, she told him her father was going to take her to Europe for an indefinite period, and that he expected her while she was there to make a good match, as his finances were in a bad state. She passionately reiterated that she did not want to marry; then burst into tears and vowed she would die if she were taken away from him. That he had become part of her very life, and that she could never love another. Then she was so humiliated by her confession that, dazed by her beauty, her fascinating wiles, he clasped her in his arms and vowed that nothing should part them; and that evening (oh, shame to womanhood that these things should be), they stepped into a church and were married before he had time to recover from the spell her enchantments had woven around

him. That spell only lasted a few days, for it was too much trouble to her to keep up the farce of love any longer. But oh, the awakening! who can depict its agony, its shame, its remorse? Kate's pure, clear eyes looked at him reproachfully wherever he turned. He tried not to think of her, but the last evening spent with her would come back to him in spite of all his efforts to banish it till the recollection almost drove him mad. He wrote, as we have seen, and told her he was married, and then settled into dull apathy, not caring what became of him, till learning through the papers of her father's financial downfall, and the death of both her parents, a wild craving to hear from her prompted him to write again, as we have seen. After dispatching his letter he waited some days in feverish anxiety for a reply. At last it came, a small note in her own handwriting, and he trembled as he took it from the hand of the servant who brought it. He laid it on the table and sat and looked at it, then he took it up and laid it down again. He would rather think of what might be in it; anything rather than be sure of her scorn. At last, when he could bear the suspense no longer, he tore it open and read these lines:

'Leslie, I forgive you. I will keep my promise, but never while I live seek to look upon my face again. You will acknowledge the justice of this restriction, and respect my wish.

'KATE.'

What was this to him who was hungering for one word of affection? Nothing! he told himself in the first misery of disappointment, for in spite of himself he had expected something different, some word that would tell

him he was still dear to her. For half an hour he paced the room like a mad man. Never, he felt, had he loved her as now, when she wished never to see his face again. He cursed his folly for having lost her. He cursed the beautiful woman who lured him away from her. 'I will see her,' he muttered. 'I will look on her sweet face again, and again I will hold her in my arms; I will kiss her sweet, sweet lips, I will make her admit she loves me, my Kate, my pearl among women.'

Suddenly he stopped his mad pacing, and again took up the letter, and as he did so, something dropped from between its folds to the floor; he bent and picked up a spray of mignonette. His face changed as if by magic. He held it tenderly in his fingers, and inhaled its perfume, while his thoughts went back to the eve of their parting, when Kate had worn a bunch of it in her bosom, and he had asked her for a spray, and she had given it him, remarking as her holy eyes met his: 'It is so sweet, that to me it always seems emblematical of pure and true love.'

'And you have sent me this, my darling,' he cried bitterly, 'and I am not even worthy to touch it.'

The storm was over, and he who had lately given little thought to prayer, knelt there and prayed that God would make him a purer and better man.

And Selina Vincent, what had she gained by wrecking the lives of two human beings? Only her revenge.

She did not pretend to love her husband, or her home. She rushed into every species of dissipation, danced and flirted to her heart's content. Her beautiful face and figure were to be found at every scene of gaiety, her hus-

band accompanying her only to save appearances, and in time even that became impossible ; and the last report in the society column of the morning papers, issued a short time before our story opens, was that the beautiful Mrs. Hargrave had eloped with Captain Fitzgerald, of the — Rifles, and the guilty pair had sailed for Europe.





## CHAPTER IV.

THE SPINSTER CONTINUES TO GIVE VENT TO HER OUTRAGED FEELINGS

—KATE HOLDS THE SITUATION.

'**K**ATE,' said Helena, as the former brought a cup of tea to her bedside the morning following the memorable Hallowe'en mentioned in our first chapter. 'Kate! What have you done with that baby?'

'Dressed it and fed it,' replied Kate quietly, at the same time bracing her nerves for the coming contest.

'I did not mean that,' irritably, 'but have you sent it to the Mayor.'

'No. I had no one to send, and,'—— began Kate,

'Cannot you,' interrupted Helena, 'go to Mrs. Beech and ask her if she will let her girl take it, and you can write a note explaining how it came here. I know the Mayor is the proper person to send it to, and the sooner it is done the better. It is an abominable trick,' she added hotly, 'for anyone to palm off a baby on two single women.'

'Well, if that is where you feel it the most,' said Kate, demurely, 'I can release you from your share of the



trouble, as it would appear by this, that it is only palmed off, as you term it on one single woman,' and she handed to her sister the paper and the bank notes.

'Why did you not tell me this last night?' snapped the invalid, when she had read the paper, and counted the money.

'Because you fell asleep, and when you awakened it was too late to go into the matter; besides, I was afraid you would not sleep if you had anything more on your mind.'

'I wonder what woman could sleep with an annoyance like this on her mind. I can't, I know, and I don't want to.'

'It need not be any trouble,' began Kate, 'I——'

'You don't mean to tell me you think of keeping the brat,' interrupted Helena.

'I do,' responded Kate, in a low suppressed voice.

'Kate, you must have taken leave of your senses,' cried Helena in great excitement. 'You, a single woman, only twenty-five years of age, think of rearing an infant. Why, it will be the talk of the town.'

'The town might have something worse to talk about,' replied Kate coolly.

'Now, dear,' she continued in a coaxing voice, 'try and look at this matter from another stand-point; so far you have been thinking only of what people will say. Now, here is another view of the case. We have no little people about us, and are not likely to marry now.'

'Speak for yourself,' interrupted Helena.

'And it might be a comfort to us in our old age,' continued Kate, without noticing her sister's interruption,

'we would learn to love it. It would keep our hearts warm, and prevent us from becoming crabbed old maids.'

'I'm not likely to live long enough to be a crabbed old maid,' moaned the invalid, 'and as to you, I do not see any reason why you should not marry.'

Kate had not told her sister of her engagement to Leslie Hargrave on her return from C——, as she did not like to parade her happiness while her sister was ill. She thought it would be time enough when Helena was better; but Helena did not get better, and now that it was broken off she would not tell her for Leslie's sake; she would not hear him spoken of as she knew Helena would speak, if made acquainted with the details concerning his marriage and its wretched results.

'Why cannot you like John Windermere?' continued Helena.

'I do like him.'

'Then why don't you marry him?'

'He has not asked me,' replied Kate. 'In any case, Nell, dear, you had better not entertain the hope of my marrying; I'm not a marrying woman.'

'Why?'

'I don't think matrimony would suit me; I don't think I would make a good wife.'

'Why?'

'Well, I'm queer in my ideas and like to have my own way; so please, Nell, let me have my way about this babe, the sender must have thought that I had a talent for training a baby or he would not have sent it to me.'

'How do you know it was a man left it?'

'I judge by the writing, and the money.'

'It is very strange,' said Helena musing; 'it would almost appear as though it were some one who knew us; in that case,' she continued, 'the child may be well born.'

'I think it is,' said Kate eagerly, carried away by her sister's softened mood, 'and I would so like to keep it; I want something to live for.'

The last words were uttered involuntarily.

'Something to live for,' cried Helena, staring at Kate in amazement, 'one would think you had tried everything else and failed.'

A crimson flush spread to Kate's white brow, and there was a suspicious quiver in her voice, as she replied:

'I think I have been a failure in many ways, but in this I think I would succeed.'

There was a pause of some moments; the invalid who was never very energetic was getting tired of opposition. Kate resumed, 'May I write to Aunt Merryvale for advice? She would know best what we ought to do. If I write directly, there is time for a reply to reach us to-morrow.'

'Well, Kate, as you like; I wash my hands of this matter.'

At this moment a low wailing cry came from the next room, and Kate retreated to comfort her charge, and write her note to Aunt Merryvale, whose advent we will leave for a new chapter.



## CHAPTER V.

AUNT MERRYVALE—THE SPINSTER MAKES A LAST PROTEST AGAINST  
THE INNOVATION—NEVER COULD FEEL SENTIMENTAL ON AN EMPTY  
STOMACH.

AUNT MERRYVALE was the only sister of Mr. Lindwood, and lived in a small town thirty miles from Beeborough, where she had resided many years. She had married early in life and had lost her husband in less than a year from their wedding-day, and had remained a widow ever since, in spite of numerous temptations to change her state. She lived on a very small life annuity, and at the time we write was in her sixtieth year. She was above the medium height and very spare, and adjusted her garments in a way to make her appear even more so than was necessary. She paid semi-annual visits to her nieces, in whose welfare she felt a great interest, and it was on one of these occasions that Kate had suggested some improvement to her form and the set of her dress, when the old lady drew herself up and replied :

‘I’ll have none of your fandangoes ; if you had been born with a hump you would try every means to get rid

of it instead of making it large; then why am I, who am so perfectly made, to disfigure myself.' 'Her hair was pearl white, and her complexion fair and pure as a young girl's, a delicate shade of pink on each cheek, and fine clear grey eyes that had an undaunted and merry glance. She was in all a very attractive woman. She was fond of her home, and once when asked why she did not live with her nieces,' replied: 'Oh, I think, as a rule, as regards relatives, that distance lends enchantment to the view. We agree now, and perhaps we would not if we lived together; besides, I am too old to bear transplanting.'

Now, truth to tell, Aunt Merryvale would like to have made her home with her nieces, if she had been sure it would have been agreeable to them; and her nieces would have liked her with them, but would not ask her, for their sakes, to break up the home that had been hers so many years. Thus circumstances were bringing matters to a crisis likely to suit all parties, when Kate wrote and posted the following note:

'BEEFOROUGH, Nov. 1st, 18—.

'DEAR AUNT.—Last night a baby was left on our door-step, "by some person or persons unknown," with a request to me to train it in the way it should go, and one hundred dollars to train it with, and a promise of more when required. Please tell me what I had better do with it. Your affectionate niece.

'KATE LINDWOOD.'

Kate thought this note would bring her aunt in person and she was not mistaken. At nine in the evening that estimable lady knocked at the door, and entered without waiting for a reply to her summons. She gave her nieces

each a short crisp kiss, threw her bonnet and mantle on the table, and taking a comfortable chair turned to Kate, and with a mock tragedy air exclaimed: 'Now, bring on your baby! I'm equal to any number of babies. Bring them on!'

'There's only one,' said Kate with a smile. All her troubles seemed to vanish in her aunt's cheery presence.

'Well, bring it here.'

'It's asleep,' said Kate, turning to the basket, which she had converted into a cradle.

'Never mind that! I should like to know what kind of temper it has. A child that can be wakened out of sleep without crying may be worth rearing. Is it a girl or a boy?'

'A girl, aunt.'

'Well, I am glad of that! there are more men now in the world than the world will be any the better for; and I should not like it on my conscience that I had anything to do with the rearing of another man to swell the number that are no credit to themselves. I'd rather see the world without a man in it. Bring me your embryo woman, I say, and let me see what she is like.'

Kate took up the infant, tenderly, and laid it on her aunt's knee. The movement partially wakened her and she opened a pair of deep blue eyes, fixed them for a moment on Aunt Merryvale's face, closed them slowly and again slumbered.

'Good tempered,' continued Aunt Merryvale, 'that's one thing in her favour; and now to business. Which of you two is most desirous that this child should remain here, because ——'

'I don't want it, aunt,' cried Helena, hotly; 'there is sure to be a scandal made out of it.'

'You interrupted me, Helena. I was going to say because, if you wish to keep the infant, you will have to take me as well, as there is a certain fitness of things to be observed, as you say, there might be a scandal. Let me see, Helena, the child resembles you strongly; it has a nose, two eyes and a mouth. I see we shall have to proceed very carefully.'

'Dear aunt,' said Kate, coaxingly, 'do come and live with us, and that will end all the trouble.'

'Want to draw a woman of my years and respectability into this scandalous business, do you?' cried the old lady, with a comical look. 'Well, I will not make any rash promises, but will care for this infant while you bring in some supper; anything you have will do. There is a box of sardines in my satchel, I know Helena likes them, and some pears for you. You are fond of pears, and why you have never been paired puzzles me. You are not, strictly speaking, bad-looking.'

'Am I not,' said Kate, laughing lightly. 'Then there may be some chance for me yet, auntie, though I do think it would be the making of a nice old maid spoiled.'

'Don't talk lightly, Kate,' said the old lady, rebukingly, at the same time drawing a long, solemn face.

'Don't you know that the end of "old maids" is said to be to "lead apes down there,"' and she slowly pointed her forefinger downward, while her grey eyes twinkled.

'Nevertheless, I'd rather die a spinster than run the risk of leading one here,' laughed Kate, as she spread a cloth on the table and left the room to prepare a supper for three.

While this badinage had been going on between Aunt Merryvale and Kate, Helena had remained silent; now she raised herself to a sitting posture and began—

‘Aunt, do you really mean to encourage Kate in the absurd folly of rearing this child, in the face of all that is likely to be said about it?’

‘What is likely to be said about it?’ queried her aunt.

‘Everything! Beeborough is such an awful place for scandal. I know this thing will be the death of me. I cannot bear worry of any kind. No one knows how delicate my nerves are.’

‘You are not likely to die yet,’ remarked Aunt Merryvale impressively. ‘You are not good enough to go to heaven yet, and I hope that none of my relatives are bad enough to go below. Most of them have had uprising tendencies, and I trust you will follow their example in this respect.’

Helena made no reply to these remarks, and the old lady continued solemnly,

‘Helena, we have many battles with self; many prejudices to overcome; many hard trials to bear before we are fitted for the Kingdom of Heaven. Charity covers a multitude of sins. Let us suppose that this community is not as uncharitable as you think. Let us do our duty, fearing nothing, and leave the sequel to a higher power. You lie here ill till you get all sorts of fanciful notions, and a change will do you good, and the care of this infant will be a decided change.’

‘You surely do not wish me to take care of it?’ cried Helena, helplessly.



‘Certainly not ; but it will have an enlivening effect ; will be a new and breezy element in your home. I do not see any difficulty in this matter, but rather a blessing. My dear Helena, there are many things equally hard to bear as ill health. The daily struggle with the ordinary trials of life,—the care of a fretful invalid—(excuse me, I only wish to show you things as they are) have changed Kate so in the last year that I hardly knew her.’

‘Why, she never complains,’ cried Helena in astonishment.

‘No, that’s just where it is. Complaints act on the mind like an escape valve to an engine, and relieve the machinery. She never, as you say, complains, and consequently the pressure is wearing her out. Now, I do not blame you in any way. It is not your fault ; but now, when there appears a way out of the difficulty, try and fall into the current of events gracefully. You tell me the babe was sent forth with one hundred dollars, and more to come as required, and it is my belief that it will come, probably quarterly ; and think of the assistance that will be to you. Kate will be able to have help in the kitchen, and life will not be so hard for her at least. And if you wish it, and have room for me, I will add my little income to yours, and make my home with you.’

‘Dear aunt, I should like it above all things,’ cried Helena ; ‘I have always wished it, I feel better already for having you here. Kate and I are rather dull sometimes, and a “new element” as you say in the household will be refreshing, and,’ she continued deprecatingly, ‘I will put up with the baby for the sake of having you.’

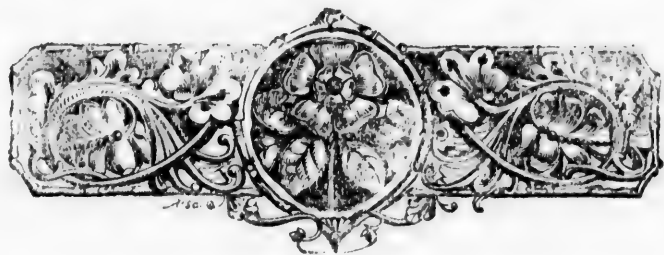
‘Then I will stay and take the responsibility of the in-

fant and administer all the spankings necessary to its health and growth.'

Here Kate appeared with the supper-tray.

'And now let me satisfy the cravings of hunger,' continued Aunt Merryvale, laying the babe in the cradle, 'that I may be able to see the romance of this affair in its proper light. I never could feel sentimental on an empty stomach.'





## CHARTER VI.

THE 'EVENING CHRONICLE'—MR. AND MRS. BEECH—MRS. BEECH CALLS ON MISS LINDWOOD AND FINDS THE SITUATION VERY FUNNY—THE PLAINER THE GIRL THE SOONER SHE MARRIES—THE COMING WOMAN—DR. DASHWOOD APPEARS UPON THE SCENE—MRS. DASHWOOD IS UNNECESSARILY HEALTHY.

**I**N the *Evening Chronicle* of the fourth of November, eighteen hundred and seventy-four, among the 'local items,' appeared the following announcement :

'Among the other wild acts perpetrated on All-Hallow-eve, we hear that a child, from three to four months old, was left at the residence of Miss Lindwood, Maple street, where it will be kindly taken care of till the parents can be discovered. The child was well dressed, and money was found on its person.'

The same evening, Mr. Beech (manager of the Commercial Bank, Beeborough) read the paragraph aloud to his wife as they sat at the tea-table, whereupon Mrs. Beech sprang up, passed swiftly to the opposite end of the table, and looking over her husband's shoulder, cried excitedly :

'Let me see, Joseph ! how funny. Poor things. What will they do with it ? Isn't it funny ?'

Mrs. Beech was only nineteen and had been two years married, and considered twenty-five quite old, particularly if single, and for this reason continually applied the term 'old things' to women equally fresh-looking as herself, for be it known, her trials during these two years of house-keeping had been many. She was one of those women who could not bear to see a chair out of place, a book the wrong side up, a paper on the table, or the most innocent description of cob-web. She vowed that dirt would be the death of her; so she swept and dusted, dusted and swept, and there was no peace for the innocent spider and fly, no peace for her husband, no peace for herself, and the lines indicative of her peculiar disposition began to show upon her face, though with all this anxiety on her mind she was at all times merry as a cricket.

'Isn't it funny, Joseph,' she continued, 'to think of the Lindwoods having a baby left on their door-step? I must go at once and see what it is like. They won't know what to do with it. Old maids never do know anything about children.'

'I think they have their aunt with them, and I believe she has been married about as long as you have,' responded Mr. Beech, in a slow, quiet tone, 'though that being some time ago might make a difference.'

'Now, don't laugh, Joseph.' Mr. Beech had not laughed, he seldom did.

'I know a good deal about babies. I saw Mrs. Lane's, our washerwoman, when it had the whooping-cough, and I know it had to be slapped on the back when it coughed.'

'But probably this baby has not got the whooping-

cough,' remarked the imperturbable Joseph. 'In that case what particular use do you expect to be?'

'You think I don't know anything,' cried the young wife with a pout, 'but you can't say I'm not a good house-keeper.'

'Certainly not, my dear, I do not know your equal,' and added under his breath, 'almost too good.'

'What's that you say, Joseph?'

'Nothing, dear, nothing; I was only thinking aloud.'

'What were you thinking about?'

'What a good house-keeper you are, and how very nice this tea is,' and he finished his third cup, rose and took a chair before the fire, while Mrs. Beech, satisfied with this little sop, rang the bell for the maid-of-all-work

'My dear,' said Mr. Beech, after the tea equipage had been removed, and Mrs. Beech stood before him giving a last flirt to her dress, and pulling on her gloves, preparatory to making a visit to the Misses Lindwood, to satisfy her curiosity respecting 'that baby,' as she called it.

'My dear, may I put my feet on the footstool? I have my slippers on.'

'Yes, dear, if you will put a paper on it first—these things are so easily soiled,' and she left her husband with his paper, while she tripped along the street and knocked at Miss Lindwood's door.

'Why, Kate,' she exclaimed, as that young lady opened the door. 'Isn't it funny?'

'Is not what funny?' asked Kate.

'Why, that you should have a baby left on your doorstep. Joseph has just been reading about it in the evening paper. Isn't it funny?'

'I don't know,' said Kate. 'Would you think it funny if it had been left with you?'

'Well, no, but that would be different. I'm a married woman, and might be supposed to know something about the rearing of an infant,' and she straightened herself up with an air that brought a smile to Kate's face.

After being made acquainted with Mrs. Merryvale, and saluting the invalid's soft cheek, Mrs. Beech turned to Kate.

'Now, do let me see that baby. I do love babies. Where is it? Do let me see it.'

'It is here,' said Kate, drawing the basket to her visitor's side, and disclosing to view 'The Pearl,' as they called her, with her eyes wide open; her mouth also, and into which she was trying to force one dimpled hand. She gurgled a welcome to Mrs. Beech, as that lady bent over her, and exclaimed,

'Ah, you beauty! Kate, isn't she a beauty?' and she patted each cheek with the usual keck, keck, keck, keck, a sound formed by a peculiar contact of the tongue and teeth, and supposed to be the only language that the infant mind is capable of comprehending, and Pearl showed her understanding was above par, by dimpling and cooing in the most enchanting manner.

'Isn't she sweet,' continued Mrs. Beech, as she took her from the basket, to examine her more closely. 'She has most peculiar eyes. I can't help looking at them. I have seen eyes like hers somewhere before.'

'Where?' cried Kate involuntarily, the colour rising in her cheeks.

Mrs. Beech did not notice her agitation, but continued

'Somewhere, I do not know where,' and she puckered her eyebrows with a puzzled expression.

'They are not bad-looking eyes, now,' broke in Aunt Merryvale, 'but there is no telling what they will be, children change so. A little while ago, I presume they have looked like the eyes of a boiled lobster, the next phase will probably be an ogling eye; and from that they will pass to the gooseberry, and the gimlet, if she remain single, eh, Mrs. Beech?'

'Ah! she is too pretty to remain single,' twittered Mrs. Beech.

'Not at all,' responded Aunt Merryvale, with *empresement*; 'as a rule, the plainer the girl, the sooner she marries.'

'How do you make that out?' queried Mrs. Beech, her colour rising, and the little sharp point on the end of her nose looking sharper still, for Mrs. Beech, as before stated, had married young.

'There are many reasons,' resumed Aunt Merryvale. 'Firstly, she is unaccustomed to attention, and her heart yields at the first siege. Secondly, she has usually only one lover at a time, therefore she is not troubled in making her choice between two or more. Thirdly, she thinks her first offer may be the only offer she will ever have. Whereas the beauty is accustomed to homage from her cradle, and as she passes through life, men come and go, and lovers wax and wane, and she marryeth not, for she either does not find anyone to suit her, or she has set her affections on the unattainable, or she loves to exercise her power over men. In time, a gray hair, or a crow's foot, awakens her to the consciousness that youth is past. Then,

if she be a fool, she rushes into a loveless marriage, to avoid the reproach, as some think it, of being an old maid. If she be wise, she goes quietly on her way to a beautiful old age, and love, pure and true, will attend her to the end.'

'You were married very young yourself, auntie,' said Helena, with a view to covering their visitor's too apparent discomforture.

'So I was, and for one of the reasons I have just mentioned. What a career I might have had, if I had only resisted that one temptation. What a model old maid I might have been,' she added with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

Aunt Merryvale had seen at a glance that Mrs. Beech thought her nieces old, in fact quite beyond the pale of matrimony, and determined to have a little fun at her expense.

'I don't see any disgrace in a woman being single,' she continued. 'It seems to me rather a credit than otherwise. It shows she has some strength of mind, and is able to resist the smiles and wiles of man. Kate, my dear, I must see what can be made of you. Spinsters are becoming the fashion now, and we must not be without one in our family.'

'I hope I shall be a credit to you,' laughed Kate. 'Do you wish me to model myself from the exclusive and melancholy, crabbed and sour, prying and peeping, tattling and tale-bearing, or frolicsome and gushing type?'

'Not any of these,' responded Aunt Merryvale, 'they are all old-fashioned, and you may just as well live out



of the world as out of the fashion. The thing to be desired now, and in the coming time, is a sensible, true, natural woman, one who does not care one iota, from a society point of view, whether she be married or single; one who is willing to do her duty in that sphere of life in which it has pleased God to place her, and with that baby on your hands for occupation, and no time to note the waning of your *outward* beauty, there will be a fair prospect of your attaining to the *inward* beauty of the type now in demand.'

'I hope I shall come up to your expectations, dear auntie,' whispered Kate, as she pressed a kiss upon the soft pink cheek of the old lady.

'I think, with a little cultivation, you would make a fair specimen of the gushing type,' put in Mrs. Beech, who had been watching for an opportunity to give vent to a feeling of irritation that had been struggling for utterance ever since Aunt Merryvale commenced speaking.

'Kate has many years to live before she will be old, whether married or single,' spoke up Helena from the sofa where she was resting. Helena disliked discussions on ages, and never would tell her own, but persisted in stating that a lady's age was what she looked, and in this gained an advantage, as she looked younger than she really was.

Here the conversation was interrupted by another knock at the door, and the entrance of no less a personage than Dr. Dashwood, who, after greeting Mrs. Merryvale, whom he had known for some years, and having a sly thrust at Mrs. Beech on finding her with a

child in her arms, and pinching Kate's cheek, took a chair and sat down by the invalid, and after feeling her pulse for a few minutes, exclaimed—

‘By Jove! here is a decided improvement, what have you been doing with her? Pulse better than I have found it for a month. Go on with that tonic and eat plenty of beef-steak, and we'll be dancing at your wedding yet instead of wearing crape at your funeral.’

‘The doctor still likes his little joke,’ put in Mrs. Beech, turning to Aunt Merryvale.

‘I don't think he means it as a joke,’ returned Aunt Merryvale. ‘I think myself that Helena is better.’

‘Oh! but about her marrying, I mean,’ giggled Mrs. Beech.’

‘Ah, true!’ responded Aunt Merryvale, with intense gravity. ‘I wish he would not put such ideas into the child's head, another ten years will be time enough for that. Speeches of that kind are apt to make girls forward.’

Mrs. Beech's colour rose, though she scarcely knew why she felt uncomfortable.

The doctor at this moment turned his attention to the Pearl.

‘Fine child, Mrs. Beech; but it was sly of you to get this over without saying anything to me about it.’

Mrs. Beech's cheeks grew pinker still, but before she could reply, Aunt Merryvale interposed.

‘That child is mine, and I won't have her given away heedlessly to anybody.’

‘Bless me, ma'am! You don't say so!’

‘I do, I’ve adopted her, I want to see if I can’t rear a woman after an idea of my own, that she may be a pattern for the rising generation to copy from. Poor things, they have nothing to follow now but the frilled and furbelowed type, which I am going to make it the aim of my life to extinguish before I die, and then will commence the reign of common-sense.’

‘Ah, true, it could not commence while you are on earth,’ said the doctor with a merry twinkle in his eye.

‘Now, doctor, don’t practice any of your sharpness on me.’

‘Where did you pick up this infant, anyway?’ queried the doctor, ‘and whose is it?’

Whereupon Kate ventured an explanation.

‘So it is you who have got the training of this infant, is it? Ah, I see,—no servant,—sick sister, haven’t enough to do to occupy your time. Suppose you try baby farming. I’ll engage to supply you with a select number of babies, on commission; say ten per cent on the amount paid for maintenance. Don’t see why I should not make my little pile as well as you?’

‘I agree,’ said Kate, ‘on condition that you supply the soothing syrup gratis.’

‘This being all arranged,’ continued the doctor, ‘I must wander on in life’s dreary way, and go and see my next patient,’ and the doctor took his leave, accompanied as far as the door by Mrs. Beech, who informed him by the way that ‘it was very funny that the Lindwoods should have a baby left on their door-step.’

‘It’s a great blessing, Mrs. Beech,’ said the kind-hearted

doctor. 'If I mistake not, it will add considerably to their income, and thus enable my patient to procure the necessities for strengthening her constitution. My dear little woman,' he continued 'it is very sad to have to realize these things, but I believe it is as much the need of necessary nourishment, as actual disease, that has prevented Miss Lindwood's recovery; she would not take the nourishment I have ordered because she knew there was no money forthcoming to pay for it.'

'Good gracious!' cried Mrs. Beech; 'I had no idea of such a thing.'

'No; few of us know how our next-door neighbours live, and even when we do, it is almost impossible for us to assist people of their class,\* save by kind words, Mrs. Beech, and in that I know you will always be first.'

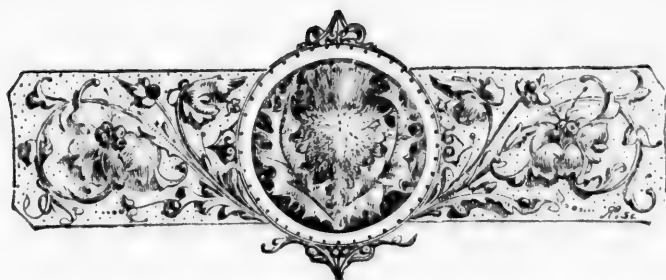
The doctor went on his way, and as he will appear from time to time in these pages, we will now introduce him more fully to the reader.

Six years ago, Dr. Stephen Dashwood came to Beeborough, with a wife and small family, to take the practice of Dr. Ellis, deceased, since which time he and old Dr. Newton had ranked as the first physicians in the town. The doctor was forty years of age, of medium height, broad shoulders, an expansive forehead, keen grey eyes, reddish hair and whiskers, and a kindly, jovial manner that was almost enough to raise the sick without the aid of medicine. He had often met Aunt Merryvale before, and the two, with their shrewd common-sense and love of humour, thoroughly appreciated each other; indeed Aunt Merryvale had been heard to say, that if ever she could

be tempted to marry again, it would be by Dr. Dashwood, though she lamented that there was little hope of it, as Mrs. Dashwood was, or appeared to be, unnecessarily healthy.



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## CHAPTER VII.

KATE IS CAUGHT IN A RAIN-STORM—NOVEMBER MUSINGS—ADVENT OF JOHN WINDERMERE—AN UNFAVOURABLE TIME FOR A DECLARATION—KATE'S INWARD CONFLICT—LOVE VERSUS MONEY—DR. DASHWOOD FINDS ANOTHER PATIENT.

A FEW weeks after the events narrated in the last chapter, while Kate, who had gone a little way out in the country on an errand for her aunt, was returning, she was overtaken by a violent rain-storm. The only shelter near was a clump of evergreens, by the road-side, and Kate succeeded in ensconcing herself on the lee-side of these, thus partially protecting herself from the wind that came in wild gusts, sweeping a heavy rain before it. She was tired and wet, and life at that moment seemed drear and desolate to the girl who had been reared in luxury. She wondered if it would be thus always. Would life go on as now to the end?

Then she thought of Pearl, and the changes of the last few weeks, and she muttered, 'God forgive me. How wicked I am to repine when I have so many blessings. I am so glad auntie has come to live with us; she makes

home so much brighter, and Helena is happier. Try as one may, two are not enough to make a happy home. I wonder how it would be if the circumstances were different,' and she thought of Leslie, and the home she had once hoped to share with him, and which she pictured to herself as a perfect Eden, where no harsh word, no angry look, no thoughtless speech should mar the bliss of their lives; there might be troubles, but they would bear them together, for were they not in soul as one, and no great harm could come where there was perfect love.

'Now all is changed,' thought Kate; 'the serpent beguiled him even before we entered in, and has left its trail upon all I love. I never look in the sweet face of Pearl but I expect to see the gleam of its evil eyes, even when they look most like Leslie's. I never take her in my arms but I feel its sting; and I had thought to fill my life with my love for this child, and God help me, I cannot. Yet is there always some good thing to be found if we only look for it. I believe Helena is getting fond of the infant, and her life, poor girl, is even more empty than mine. What right have I to murmur when I can walk out in the light and sunshine; aye, and the rain and mud. How I hate mud, and the necessity for walking in it; and of all the rain in the year, November rain is the most miserably depressing; and no prophet can predict the exact length of time occupied by a November shower; it may last ten minutes or it may last three days,' and she looked ruefully up at the weeping heavens, but could see no sign of a cessation of the storm, and was about to fall into another revery, when the sound of approaching footsteps smote

upon her ear, and looking round, she saw a young man advancing toward her place of partial shelter, who, as he gained her side, and held a huge umbrella over her head, exclaimed,

‘Kate! What are you doing here?’

‘Nothing,’ answered Kate, meekly.

‘A delightful location you have selected for such a refined occupation,’ he returned, quizzically.

‘I have been listening to the sobbing and moaning of sympathising nature, while the angels are weeping over poor suffering humanity,’ said Kate with a visionary smile, as she tried to shake the water from her drenched skirts.

‘You looked as if you were posing for a picture of desolation,’ returned he. ‘What troubles you?’

‘Nothing,’ said Kate. ‘It must have been the atmospheric effect that caused the illusion. Do you think this shower will soon be over?’

‘No, it has set in for a three days’ rain?’

Kate shivered visibly.

‘It will not clear off; you had better let me see you safe home. You will catch your death of cold standing here, and then what would I do,’ said the young man looking tenderly at her.

‘Go into mourning, most likely,’ said Kate coolly. It was her usual way of answering any of John Windermere’s soft speeches.

‘One would think this drenching rain would have a softening effect upon you; but I find you are just as hard as ever,’ said he, in a vexed tone.

‘Now, Jack, don’t be angry, I did not mean to say any-



thing disagreeable ; but one's speech must, to a certain extent, be in harmony with the weather, by way of maintaining the fitness of things.'

'I don't agree with you ; the duller the weather the kinder your speeches should be, to enable me to bear it with patience. Come,' he added smiling, 'I cannot say "Come under my *plaidy*," but come under my umbrella, and I will protect you as well as I can,' and he drew her arm through his, while he added impetuously : 'I wish from my heart you would let me protect you through life.'

Kate started and drew her hand from his arm, but he coolly replaced it as he said :

'Don't be alarmed, I'm not going to weary you with an expression of my feelings, when you are so tired you can scarcely stand. Lean on me and forget my thoughtless words for the present. On a brighter day we will talk on this subject again.'

He felt her hand tremble on his arm, and he continued—

'Pardon me, I should not have spoken to you at a time like this, but indeed I was not responsible. My words came unbidden, and though I regret I spoke them now, yet I will not take them back.'

Kate made no reply, and for some moments they walked on through the drenching rain in silence.

'You are ill, Kate,' he remarked presently, as he noticed that her face was white as death.

'No, not ill, Jack ; you frightened me ; we have been friends so long. Don't let me lose your friendship, Jack, I could not bear it,' and the tears rose to her eyes.

'I shall always be your friend, Kate, as I always have been,' returned the young man, while he struggled against a suffocating feeling in his throat; 'but we won't talk about it now; you must get home and take off your wet clothes, or you will be ill;' and he tenderly guided her weary steps to her own door, where he left her in the care of her aunt, and wended his way home with a heavier heart than he had known for years; for look at his prospects from whatever point of view he would, there was no brightness; her manner had been very discouraging. For years he had entertained the hope of some day calling her his wife, and now, when he was in a fitting position to claim her, he felt his hopes crumbling away before the strange manner in which she received his first open confession of love.

John Windermere, with his widowed mother, lived in a comfortable home on the outskirts of Beeborough, where they had a considerable landed estate, which was mortgaged nearly up to its value, and for some years they had had enough to do to meet their expenses, without adding to them; and John had found it impossible to take to himself a wife under such circumstances; but all this had changed more than a month ago, when, through the death of a relative, he had inherited a considerable fortune.

He and Kate had played together as children, and though Kate was three years the elder, this knowledge did not prevent him, from a very early period of life, entertaining the thought that she would be his wife; and while he was marvelling how he should win her, she, looking upon him only as a boy, and treating him as such, gave her love to an older, but not a better nor a wiser

man, and had never guessed John's love for her till his change of fortune, in the last few weeks, had unfettered his tongue.

Kate retired to her bed that night with a weary load at her heart. She knew that Jack would come on the morrow to urge his suit, and what answer should she give? Of course she must refuse him. She tossed restlessly on her bed, and why should I refuse him, she thought. Hundreds of women marry with only a feeling of cold respect. Hundreds more without even that, and I am fond of Jack; have always been fond of him in a quiet, reliable way. Helena wishes me to marry him, then why should I not? Helena would have more money if I were away, as I would leave her my little portion; I should tell Jack so before I married him. 'Yes, married him,' she repeated aloud, as though trying to accustom herself to the thought, and she rose from her couch and paced up and down the room.

'And why should I not marry him?' she muttered defiantly. 'If I do not marry him some one else will, someone, probably, who will not care half as much for him as I do, and will not be good to him, and I shall feel as if I might have saved him. Marry him. Yes, that means be with him always; keep nothing from him; never have a thought he may not share, and Leslie ——'

She paused in her walk and stood like a statue for some moments, then suddenly stretching out her arms in the darkness, she cried:

'My love, my love, come back to me! Oh, Leslie, I'm so weary, so weary.'

The next morning Kate did not rise as usual, and Aunt

Merryvale coming into her room found her so indisposed as to render it necessary to send for the doctor.

There was a burning flush on either cheek, a feverish light in her eyes, and her mind wandered continually.

Dr. Dashwood, on his arrival, examined his patient, and expressed the opinion that a fever had set in, as the natural result of cold and exposure; but he added, drawing Aunt Merryvale aside,

‘There is more than this; she is utterly prostrated by her long attendance on her sister, and feels the reaction now that you are in a measure bearing her burden.’

‘I never knew how hard her burden was until this visit of mine, or I would have been here long ago,’ exclaimed Aunt Merryvale with energy. ‘Poor child, I did not know they had not means sufficient to live on until now.’

‘And how is it now?’ asked the kind-hearted doctor.

‘Oh, with the care of the Pearl, if her allowance comes quarterly, as I suppose it will, we can be very comfortable. I wonder who she is?’

The doctor made no reply to this query; he seemed absorbed in thoughts of his patient.

‘Can you manage to nurse Miss Kate? She will need some care for a few days when this will, I trust, pass away.’

‘Oh, yes,’ responded Aunt Merryvale, cheerfully. ‘I have succeeded in getting a good maid-of-all-work, and shall have nothing to do but look after Kate and the Pearl.’

Here Kate moved in her sleep and muttered: ‘Pearl; let me keep Pearl.’

‘Bring the child in, Mrs. Merryvale,’ ordered the doctor.

The child was brought in and laid in Kate’s arms, and for a moment she looked at it with intense longing in her brilliant eyes, as she said softly :

‘Like Leslie’s, yes, like Leslie’s.’ Then suddenly her expression changed to one of horror as she exclaimed wildly,

‘Take her away ! Take her away ! She is false and treacherous.’

The doctor removed the child and as he did so he muttered,

‘Strange. I did not think she knew anything about the child ; there is something here that I do not understand.’

‘Mrs. Merryvale,’ he continued, speaking aloud, ‘you will not let any one see your niece till she regains perfect consciousness. I can trust you. It is necessary that she be kept perfectly quiet. He mixed a draught for her and saw it administered : then he sat down by the bed, and bent his ear to catch her muttered words. Her mind was now following another train of thought, and she whispered softly, ‘Poor Jack,’ and entreated some one to be her friend, as she was so desolate.

‘Poor girl,’ thought the doctor, ‘life has been too hard for her in some way ; let us hope it will be right in the end. I always thought John Dashwood had a fancy for her ; but her strange talk about Leslie and the baby is more than I can comprehend, and I must see to it.’

That evening Dr. Dashwood wrote a note which he ad-

dressed to Dr. Annesley, St. ——— Hospital, London,  
England.

'DEAR JAMES,—I have reason to suppose that Miss Kate has learned something about the child ; but how I can't imagine. She is ill, and in her delirium I heard her distinctly mention the name 'Leslie,' and she spoke of the child's likeness to Leslie. I can't make it out. I write to put you on your guard. As ever,

'STEPHEN DASHWOOD.'





## CHAPTER VIII.

KATE RECOVERS—SHE REFUSES JOHN—PEARL AND HELENA—KATE'S  
MUSINGS—ANOTHER DOCTOR APPEARS UPON THE SCENE—PESTERED  
BY WIDOWERS—A WOMAN MAY BE BEAUTIFUL AT ANY AGE.

**K**ATE LINDWOOD'S recovery was slow ; but good medical attendance and good nursing combined did wonders, and before Christmas she was fairly convalescent, and her natural gaiety had in a measure returned.

John Windermere had been most attentive in sending her fruit and flowers during her illness, but had not asked to see her, till one evening, when he could bear the suspense no longer, he ventured again to plead his cause, and was kindly but firmly refused. Winter passed away, summer came and went, and time glided slowly on, without any material change to any of the prominent persons connected with our tale, save Miss Lindwood, who had gained sufficient strength to enable her to walk out into the small garden that surrounded the house, and which was the pride of Kate's heart. Here blushed the roses and geraniums, and here the sweet mignonette per-

fumed the air, and here Helena reclined on a rustic seat one lovely evening in June, more than a year and a half after the events mentioned in our last chapter. She was engaged in the childish occupation of twisting a brilliant button on a string for the amusement of Pearl, who, as it glittered in the light of the setting sun, laughed and dimpled in wild delight, as she stretched out her chubby hands to catch it.

It was a pretty scene. The pale, delicate woman, and the healthy, happy child ; and Kate watched it from the open window with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain : pleasure at the interest her sister took in the little one, and pain at being so thoroughly supplanted in the child's heart ; as it was evident to everybody that Pearl bestowed her best affections on Helena ; and Kate acknowledged it was just.

Helena never turned coldly away from the sweet, dimpled face raised to hers so trustingly. Helena never unclasped the little arms from her neck as if their clasp choked her. Helena would always play with Pearl unless she were too ill to sit up, and when this was the case, the child would come softly up to her side and say, in her childish accents :

‘Poor Heena, Heena’s thick.’

Then she would take her little handkerchief, dip it in water, and lay it on the sufferer’s brow ; and Helena, as she wiped away the surplus drops that trickled round her neck, would call her ‘Little Comforter.’

Helena was greatly changed since we first introduced her to the reader. Though still very far from strong, the nervous irritability had left her, and she seemed to gain



new life from the fresh little life that was so constantly beside her.

As Kate looked at the two, she marvelled at the change in her sister. She who, less than two years ago, strove to shut the little one out of her home, now seemed unable to live without her; and I, who wanted so much to keep her, she thought, 'has she ever been any comfort to me? Sometimes I think I may have been mistaken; but why was she sent to me? And then the likeness, there is no mistaking the likeness; and it grows greater every day.'

As Kate mused in this strain, the garden gate was thrown open, and Dr. Dashwood advanced up the gravel walk, followed by a stranger. They paused directly under the window where Kate was sitting concealed by the curtain; and the stranger, grasping the doctor's arm, exclaimed:

'What a lovely woman! Is she Miss Kate?'

'No; Helena.'

'And is that poor Leslie's child?'

Kate heard no more, for they passed on to greet Helena.

'Poor Leslie's child!' she repeated. 'Then I was not mistaken;' and in great inward agitation she rose and followed the two gentlemen, in the wild hope of hearing something of Leslie.

As she approached she saw, as in a dream, the stranger sitting on the rustic seat beside Helena, and trying to entice the timid child by attractively displaying the seals on his watch chain.

The little one advanced and retreated, and advanced

again, and at last allowed herself to be lifted to his knee, just as the doctor, who stood a little apart, exclaimed :

‘Miss Kate ! this will never do, you are as white as a ghost. What ails you, child ?’

‘Nothing.’

‘You must have more fresh air,’ continued the doctor. ‘I declare, if you continue to look so pale, I shall have to constitute myself your lover, and come every day and take you for a drive.’

Always in fear lest her secret should be discovered, the colour rushed in a flood to Kate’s cheeks, brow and neck, and she had no time to recover when the doctor continued :

‘Dr. Annesley, Miss Kate. I have brought him here,’ he added, as the pair saluted each other, ‘to help me cure my patients ; and I shall put you specially under his charge if ever you dare to come into my presence looking so white again. I don’t like white women.’

‘Perhaps you prefer black,’ retorted Kate, wickedly, as she tried to recover herself. ‘If so, I am sorry for you, What a sad thing it must be to live for months together without seeing a face you can admire. I suppose want of colour is a great blemish. Go south, doctor, if you wish to see perfection.’

‘I see perfection now,’ gallantly returned the doctor, making a deep genuflection, as he looked smilingly into Kate’s flushed face.

‘Miss Kate, I shall be very happy to offer my services,’ interposed Dr. Annesley, quietly, as he placed Pearl upon the seat from which he had risen at Kate’s approach ;

‘allow me to feel your pulse.’

Kate turned away with a laugh, declaring she was not ill, only a little tired.

With this they all rose and entered the house, Dr. Annesley offering his arm to Helena, and as he placed her on a lounge in the cosy sitting-room, he took a seat by her side, and gradually drew from her all the details of her long illness.

'Miss Linwood,' and his voice had an eager tone, 'I wish, with my friend's permission, you would let me try to bring you back to perfect health. I think I could do much to forward your recovery. Will you let me prescribe for you?'

'I have no hope of ever being well,' returned poor Helena; 'for a long time I have felt very rebellious, but lately I have become resigned to my fate, and am almost afraid to hope again.'

'Trust me,' said the doctor; 'in this case I do not think I can fail.'

Here little Pearl tried to clamber to his knee, as she cried—

'Dood man, mate Heena well.'

'I will try, dear,' he replied, tenderly, as he took the child in his arms, and smoothing the hair from her forehead, looked at her intently, while a shadow crossed his face.

'I will try, if you will kiss me.'

The child immediately put both arms around his neck, and kissed his bearded cheek, then struggled off his knee to the floor, and looking up in his face, cried—

'Now, mate Heena well,' in a tone as if she expected the transformation to begin at that moment.

While this scene was going on Aunt Merryvale had entered the room, unnoticed, and after greeting Dr. Dashwood, and being presented to his friend, she commenced,

‘Now, what was all that I saw as I came in. Did my eyes deceive me, or did I see that young lady kissing a man? Oh, Pearl! Pearl! I thought I was going to make a model woman of you.’

‘Your course of instruction is all right, madam,’ interrupted Dr. Dashwood; ‘A perfect woman must have a perfect mouth, and a man never sees a perfect mouth without experiencing a desire to have a perfect kiss,’ whereupon he approached Mrs. Merryvale with his mouth formed into a preparatory pucker.

‘Off, wretch,’ cried the old lady, with a tragic air; ‘would you dare to insult a lady of my years and respectability, by practising any of your wicked arts on me?’

‘Arts, my dear madam; you are mistaken; it is a simple out-gushing of nature; but I beg your pardon for offering you the homage of my—lip in public. I have read somewhere some lines about “the bliss that’s in the kiss that’s taken on the sly,” and will wait a more favourable moment.’

Here a diversion was created by a loud knock at the door, and a summons for Dr. Dashwood. An accident had occurred in the town, and he was wanted immediately.

The doctor and his friend took a hurried leave, and as soon as they were out of hearing, Aunt Merryvale exclaimed—

‘Thank goodness they are gone! When a man is taken

with a kissing fit there is no comfort in the house, at least for that day.'

'It's only his nonsense, auntie,' said Kate; 'he would not really attempt to kiss you.'

'I should hope not; but men are never to be trusted. They are naturally tormenting,' said the old lady, as she took up her knitting and rattled her needles with much energy.

'You speak feelingly, aunt,' said Kate. 'Have men always been a trouble to you?'

Always,' the merriment returning to her eyes.

'How?'

'I've been pestered by widowers for years. Wherever I go there is sure to be a widower. I thought I should have some peace here, but it is never well to be sure of anything. I verily believe this friend of the doctor is a widower.'

'Really!' said Kate, with a look of mock horror.

'Yes, I do. I know the signs and symptoms, and he has them; I only hope he has not come for me. I have never felt safe since I read that account of a lady of seventy being captured by a youth of twenty-five. It is true that she had money, and I have none, which might make some difference; though it is not a consoling reflection, yet it proves that poverty has its bright side. Had I been rich, my trials might have been much greater.'

'Auntie, dear,' said Kate, 'you will always win love, money or no money. You are prettier now than half the young girls,' and she kissed the pink cheek which we have before had occasion to notice.

'Don't try to turn my old head with your flattery, Kate.'

'I never flatter; I mean what I say. I think there is not any age that a woman may not be beautiful.'

'True, Kate,' responded the old lady gravely; 'there is beauty in childhood, beauty in youth, beauty in the prime of life, and beauty in old age. All these beauties are different, all equally lovely, and they have their source in charity, purity, and patience.'

'I am afraid I shall never be beautiful,' said Kate.

'Why?'

'Because I am not patient, and I feel I never shall be.' She changed the conversation by saying—

'Helena, what do you think of Dr. Annesley?'

'In what way, Kate?'

'In every way; as a practitioner, especially?'

'Well,' replied Helena, 'I think he may be clever. Dr. Dashwood tells me he has travelled much, and has been through nearly all the hospitals in Europe,' and wishes him to try what he can do for me. I should like to get strong again,' she added, 'but I am afraid to hope, I have been disappointed so often.'

'I don't see why you should not hope, Helena. You are better than you were a year ago.'

'Yes, I am better; but I have no strength.'

'What does Dr. Annesley advise?'

'That I take some medicine that he will send me, and that I keep as much in the open air as possible.'

'I wish we had a horse and carriage that you might be driven out every day,' said Kate; and the thought of John Windermere, and what a benefit it might have been to

Helena if she could have said, 'yes,' rose for a moment in her mind to be as quickly cast out. 'All will be well in the end, if I do what is right,' she thought. 'It cannot be right to marry one man while I love another, even though I never see that other again. Ah, Leslie! Leslie! Why cannot I still this longing to see your face once more, to hear your voice, to feel the clasp of your hand, to know that you love me still.'





## CHAPTER IX.

THE SPINSTER AGAIN—KATE BATTLES WITH HER LONGING FOR THE  
UNATTAINABLE—HELENA'S SUBJUGATION BEGINS.

THE next day Dr. Dashwood called with his carriage and pair to take Helena for a drive, as he was on his way to see a patient who lived a short distance out of town.

'I do not think I can go,' she said to Kate, who brought the message while the doctor waited without.

'Not go!' cried Kate in wonder.

'No, I think not.'

'Why? It is what Dr. Annesley prescribed.'

'Yes, I know; but——'

'But what?' queried Kate, a little pucker forming on her upper lip, as a thought of the possible stumbling block crossed her mind. 'If you feel strong enough, where is the difficulty?'

'I am afraid it would not look well,' said Helena, tremulously, 'for me to be seen driving out with the doctor. Mrs. Dashwood might not like it.'

'We'll risk that,' said Kate, with a smile. 'It will never do to annoy the doctor, even to save his wife's feelings.'



Supposing she had any in the matter, which I doubt, she is far too sensible to indulge in absurdities. Come, Helena, let me help you put on your wrap, and don't keep the doctor waiting, or his patient may die before he gets to his destination, and then you will have something worse than Mrs. Dashwood on your mind.'

'Don't be flippanant, Kate !' cried Helena, with something of her old irritability, as she allowed Kate to adjust her wrap, and see her safe to the carriage, when she was assisted in by the doctor, who to Kate's relief was looking as grave as a judge, and they drove off, while Kate returned to the house, her head bent down, her thoughts running in the following strain.

'I wonder if I should be any better if I were always worrying myself with what people would think ? What does it matter what they think, while I have the consciousness of doing right. If I do wrong I shall be punished for that wrong, not for what people will think of it. I shall never be a slave to public opinion like Helena. It is well that one human being cannot see into the inner life of another, or how shocked Helena would be. She thinks it wrong to love before marriage, and I shall never marry ; yet I cannot kill this great love, and I would not if I could. I cling to my past as the one oasis in the desert of my life. It is strange that Helena is my sister. We are not at all alike, we cannot think the same on any subject. I verily believe Helena cannot move or breathe without considering first whether it be proper, while I obey every impulse without ever thinking of the proprieties at all. I like to feel a happy sense of freedom. I cannot be chained down by conventionalities. I shall never

make a proper "old maid," if I live to the age of Methuselah. I wonder what will become of me in the future; at present I am in a quiescent state, but I know this can not last. I am too stormy to remain quiet long. Sometimes I have a terror of the future—all seems so dark before me, and I who love the sunlight may live for years and years, until I am quite old, with this shadow hanging over me.' Kate paced the room as was her wont when indulging in this train of thought. It was a way she had of giving vent to her feelings of dissatisfaction with life generally, and herself in particular.

These moods were always followed by one of sincere repentance, when the sad dark eyes, with their expression of longing and unrest, were raised upward, and a holy light beamed in their shadowed depths, and the hitherto tremulous lip was slightly compressed with the oft-repeated resolve to be more patient in the future, to fill life with its present duties, and cease longing for the unattainable.

While Kate was wrapped in this new mood, a small figure entered the open door that led into the garden, and a small hand placed in hers a spray of mignonette. The sight of it acted on Kate like an electric shock. She placed the mignonette in her bosom, took the child up in her arms, and kissed her repeatedly, looking in her eyes as she said :—

'You are your father's child, my darling, all his; I will not entertain any other thought. God bless my little Pearl, and make me a better woman.'

Helena returned from her drive fatigued, but in better spirits. After this the doctor called often, and, although

she always demurred on account of what would be thought of it, was always persuaded to go.

One day, Dr. Dashwood's duty lying in another direction, his friend Annesley called to take her for the accustomed airing, when Kate expected another difficulty, and suggested that she should take the Pearl with her, as it would look better. Helena, however, strange to say, did not feel the force of this argument, and actually went, as Kate told Aunt Merryvale, without any fuss.

'What can have come over Helena?' said Kate.

'Only that which comes over most of us once or twice in a lifetime. Helena is falling in love, and don't you take any notice, or you will spoil all. I have seen how it would end ever since the first evening he came here. I told you then I saw the symptoms. She does not realize it herself yet. She only thinks she is obeying him because he has constituted himself her physician; but, if I mistake not, Helena has found her fate. Some day you will find yours, my dear, and then I shall be left a desolate old woman. It will come hard upon me now that I have become accustomed to live with you; but I am not going to lament over it; "what is to be will be," and if you make up your mind to marry, nothing will stop you,' and she fixed her keen gray eyes on her niece as she spoke, and noticed the flush that rose to her cheek as she replied,

'But I have not made up my mind to marry; so, auntie, dear, there is an end to the discussion.'

'I wonder why she refused John Windermere when she seemed to like him,' thought the old lady. 'There is a

mystery somewhere that I cannot fathom. I feel sorry for John, poor fellow; he is fond of her yet. Some people are strangely adhesive. I never could replace my poor Paul,' she thought with a sigh.





## CHAPTER X.

LOVE AND PRIDE—CONSTERNATION IN THE SMALL HOUSE ON MAPLE STREET—AUNT MERRYVALE FEELS IT IN HER BONES.

WEEKS passed on, and Dr. Annesley became a constant visitor at the small house. Helena's health improved under his treatment. Day by day his attentions became more pointed, and 'the course of true love' seemed to run smoothly enough, till, one evening, Dr. Dashwood came in, and, among other chat, announced that his friend, Dr. Annesley, had been suddenly called away to the city, and requested him to make his adieus to the ladies.

No one noticed the paleness that overspread Helena's face, nor that she retired earlier than usual to her room, to suffer all the pangs that a woman of her type is capable of suffering when she, for the first time, realizes that she may have given her love unsought.

She reviewed her conduct for the last few weeks minutely, and her pride would not allow her to think she had shown more than ordinary interest in him as the friend of their family doctor. She thought it more than probable that she would never see him again, but that

thought was bearable so long as he did not suspect her of an undue partiality for himself. In this possibility lay gall and wormwood ; Helena's pride was her strong point, and her sufferings were in proportion to her fears of what he might think of her ; but it was not for long that she was allowed to grieve over the loss of her new friend, for a greater calamity was hanging over her.

She had become greatly attached to Pearl. Since the days of Kate's illness the child had been almost constantly with her. Her innocent prattle had beguiled the tedium of a lonely life. She was so tender, so small, so loving, that she crept slowly but surely into the heart of the invalid, where she had reigned supreme, until she was in danger of being supplanted by James Annesley, for Helena's heart was capable of holding but one great love at a time, and now when he had left her so suddenly without a word of parting, Helena again turned her attention to her little comforter. Indeed, it was impossible to help it, for the child, noticing a difference in her, would climb into her lap, throw her little arms round her neck and kiss her, to make, as she said in her childish accents, ' poor Heena well.' And this consolation was not long to be hers.

On the evening of the third day after Dr. Annesley's departure, great excitement reigned at the cottage.

Search had been made all over the house and garden and all the near neighbourhood for Pearl, and no Pearl could be found.

Aunt Merryvale was still out searching every likely spot near their home. Helena was lying on the sofa in tears, and Kate was pacing up and down the sitting room

waiting for Dr. Dashwood, to whom she had sent a brief note begging him to come to her as she was in great trouble.

The doctor was out when the missive arrived at his office, and Kate was in a frenzy of excitement before his well-known knock was heard at the door. She flew to open it, and in scarcely articulate accents, exclaimed :

‘She is lost ! she is lost !’

‘Who is lost ?’ cried the bewildered doctor.

‘The Pearl,’ moaned Kate.

‘The devil !’ ejaculated the doctor without regard to politeness ; ‘here’s a pretty pickle. When was she lost ?’

‘We did not miss her till dark,’ returned Kate in a choked voice. ‘The last time I saw her, she was playing at the garden gate. What shall I do ?’ cried the distressed girl. ‘She was left in my charge ; oh ! doctor, what shall I do ?’

‘Was the gate open ?’

‘No. It never is left open, and this time I know it was shut, for I had just come in from a call on Mrs. Beech, and no one has been in or out since.’

‘Strange,’ muttered the doctor, and as he noted the look of misery in the girl’s face, he said :

‘Don’t be alarmed, Miss Kate ; there is no time passed yet. The child will be found in an hour or two. My dear girl,’ he added as he patted her shoulder in a fatherly way, ‘don’t distress yourself ; I am as much interested in the child as you can possibly be, and I shall immediately take steps to institute a thorough search through the town, and she will be found in a few hours. In the mean-

time do you comfort your sister, or all the good that has been done lately will be undone,' and the doctor left the house to inaugurate a band of searchers, as there was no police force in Beeborough; and Kate, finding all attempts to console her sister were in vain, paced the room as before, hour after hour, wondering how Leslie would feel, if he knew of the loss of his child,—his Pearl whom he had left with her for safe keeping; and she had neglected her trust. At twelve o'clock, Aunt Merryvale came in exhausted with her fruitless search. No news of the missing Pearl.

There was no sleep for the inhabitants of the small house on Maple street that night.

In the morning Dr. Dashwood called, and to their eager questions answered that the town had been searched from garret to cellar; but no trace of the missing Pearl could be found. One man indeed stated that as he was going home to supper at six o'clock he met a lady and gentleman driving down Maple street in a carriage, accompanied by a child that answered to the description of Pearl; and this was all the information that could be gathered after close inquiry.

The doctor suggested there was nothing now to do but to advertise; he had little doubt that the child had been stolen; but where was the motive for stealing a child supposed to be a waif thrown upon the world, and adopted by people in poor circumstances? It could not be the hope of reward. Then where could be the inducement.

The doctor racked his brains in vain for any clue to this strange affair. Day after day passed, and nothing



was heard of the missing Pearl. She went as mysteriously as she came, and none could tell where.

A week passed and found Dr. Dashwood sitting alone in his office; and as he pulled his moustache reflectively, he muttered—

‘I’m blessed if I know what to do. I’ve tried every available means, and this golden-haired, blue-eyed cherub is not to be found. I dare not tell Annesley at such a time as this, it might be his ruin. After years of concealment to have it leak out now is not to be thought of, and yet if the child is not found he may never forgive me. Egad! but I’m placed in an abominable position. I should like to know why Miss Kate must have sent to me, so as to draw me into the difficulty as soon as possible, when I’d rather not have known anything about it. She must know whose child it is. I remember she raved in her illness about Leslie’s child; and knowing, she has been strangely reticent about it, for I am certain she has not told the old lady, or her sister. There are women who can keep a secret; but how did she find it out? “There’s the rub.”’

In the meantime, Kate, who could know no rest day nor night, when all efforts to recover the Pearl were in vain, wrote the following note, which she addressed to Leslie Hargrave, Esq., 95 River Street, C——.

‘The Pearl is lost—stolen, I am afraid, and I cannot find it anywhere. What am I to do?’

‘KATE.’

Kate felt better after posting this brief note, though she was uncertain of its ever reaching him, as she had

heard some months before that he had left C——, and was travelling abroad; still she felt she had done what she could.

Gloom reigned in the home of the Lindwoods, for the little waif had won her way into the hearts of all, and the sorrow for her loss was deep and heartfelt.

Helena refused to be comforted, and her weak and wearying lamentations seemed likely to prove fatal to her friends' hopes of her perfect recovery, while Kate went about her daily duties and made no sign; but her voice had a more patient tone and a more weird expression crept into her dark eyes, under whose fringes lurked violet shadows.

Aunt Merryvale was the only one who maintained an appearance of outward cheerfulness, and was heard to declare tha' 'she felt it in her bones' that the little one would turn up all right before long, and Mrs. Beech, who was very sympathetic could not help remarking—

'Isn't it funny that the child should come and go in such a queer way? Isn't it, though?'





## CHAPTER XI.

A NEW ARRIVAL IN BEEBOROUGH—CAUGHT ON THE REBOUND—DR.  
DASHWOOD SOLICITS KATE'S CONFIDENCE—KATE'S DREAM.

WHILE the events related in the last chapter were transpiring, another was exciting an equal amount of interest in Beeborough; namely, the arrival of a wonderful singer, who was advertised to give a succession of concerts in the Town Hall. Half Beeborough had gone wild over her beauty, her grace, her fascinating voice, and so charming and piquant was her manner, that she succeeded in gaining the *entrée* to the best society in the town, and several evening parties were given for her entertainment.

Madame Rolandi had come to Canada from no one knew where, she spoke English with a foreign accent, and was accompanied by an elderly French lady who acted as chaperon; she had been heard of in some of the neighbouring towns, and her fame had spread to Beeborough before her arrival.

Among the first to pay homage to the beautiful singer was John Windermere.

Kate's refusal had left him in that state, when a man falls a prey to the first designing woman he meets, and so unrivalled were the fascinations of Madame that ere many days, he was as her shadow. He attended her everywhere; he rode and drove with her, and mad with jealousy of the numerous satellites that continually hovered round her, at the end of three weeks he offered his hand and heart, and was timidly accepted by the beauty, who demurred when he pressed for a speedy marriage; but eventually consented shortly to become his wife.

Meantime the Misses Lindwood, grieved and depressed by the loss of Pearl, took little interest in the gossip about the beautiful singer, till rumour began to connect her name with John Windermere. Then, indeed, Kate's apathy left her, and she began to wonder who it was who had won the heart that had but lately been her own, and a great desire to see this woman, whose praise was on every lip, took possession of her; therefore when Dr. and Mrs. Dashwood came one evening to invite the sisters to go to a concert where Madame Rolandi was to sing, though Helena declined, Kate gladly accepted the invitation.

The hall was crowded to its utmost capacity; but the doctor had taken reserved seats, and they sat where they had a full view of the stage.

The native talent of Beeborough was singing a quartette as they entered.

When this was concluded and the singers had retired, Kate waited with a strange feeling of expectancy for the entrance of Madame Rolandi, who, as the programme indicated, would sing the next solo.

She had not long to wait, when the green hangings at the back of the stage were parted and the beautiful singer moved forward leaning on the arm of John Windermere.

As she did so, Kate, whose eyes were rivetted on her, grasped the doctor's arm convulsively, while a muttered exclamation passed her lips.

'She is lovely,' said the doctor, who thought Kate only touched him to attract his attention to the stage. 'She is perfect in some ways, and yet there is something about her I do not like. I have watched her night after night, and cannot tell what it is. John is a good fellow, I hope all is right.'

Kate made no reply, her attention was absorbed by the singer, though she neither heard a word of the song nor a note of the music.

The concert proceeded, and Madame Rolandi came forward and sang again and again, and once when her companion who was playing the accompaniment struck a false note, an expression passed like a flash across her face that was not good to see, and Kate again grasped the doctor's arm and felt as if she must shriek aloud as she recognized Leslie Hargrave's wife.

This time the doctor turned and noted her white face and horrified expression.

'Well, this beats me,' he thought; 'she must be fond of John Windermere after all. Of all women I should have thought that Kate Lindwood knew her own mind, but it appears I was mistaken.'

The concert came to an end, and the lovely singer was led to the footlights by John Windermere, and amidst a burst of applause made her bow to the assembled multi-

tude, and as she bent her graceful head, the glare of twenty lamps fell full upon her face, and Kate once again saw the leopard-like eyes of Selina Vincent; and as she did so a strong shudder shook her from head to foot. She clasped her hands together while the words,—

‘Oh, Heaven! What shall I do?’ burst from her involuntarily.

The assembly dispersed, and while doing so the doctor procured a glass of wine, and held it to Kate’s white lips, as he said in an authoritative tone, ‘Collect your senses, Miss Kate. This is no place for a faint.’ Saying which, he gave one arm to his wife and the other to Kate and they left the hall.

Mrs. Dashwood was delicate, and complained of fatigue, and begged to be allowed to rest at a friend’s, while the doctor took Kate home, as their dwellings were in contrary directions.

After leaving Mrs. Dashwood, the doctor and Kate continued on their way, and both for a time remained silent. At length the doctor in a kindly tone of voice began:

‘Miss Kate, we have been very good friends for the last few years, have we not?’

‘I hope so,’ said Kate. ‘I have felt very friendly to you, doctor, and I owe you much for your kindness to Helena.’

‘You do not owe me anything at all,’ retorted the doctor. ‘It is quite the other way, I am indebted to you for many a pleasant hour passed in the small house on Maple street, and until to-night I have always taken you for a sensible girl. God knows there are few enough of them, and I don’t like to find myself mistaken; still, if you are

not as sensible as I thought you, that is the more reason why you may need help. Will you make a friend of me and tell me what caused the distress I saw in your face to-night ?

Kate did not reply, and he continued,

‘ I know you have been accustomed to bear your own burthens, but sometimes circumstances occur in which a friend may be useful. In any case, Miss Kate, I cannot bear to see you troubled and not try to aid you,’ and the kind-hearted doctor took her hand and patted it, as he said,

‘ Come, child, what is it ? ’

‘ You are very kind, doctor, and I will tell you what I may of that which is troubling me. I heard a rumour some days ago that Jack—Mr. Windermere—is going to marry the singer, Madame Rolandi.’

The doctor noticed how readily the name, Jack, came from her lips, and drew his own conclusions ; but he made no further remark than—

‘ Well ? ’

‘ I want to stop it.’

‘ Why do you want to stop it ? ’ cried the doctor, in amazement at the candour of this speech.

‘ Because—because—it would be illegal,’ stammered Kate, who felt herself drawn into she knew not what.

‘ How illegal, Miss Kate ? I must know all about it if you wish me to interfere.’

‘ I cannot tell you all about it,’ cried Kate, desperately, ‘ but I can tell you this—it would be illegal, because she is already married.’

'Bless me, you don't mean it, Miss Kate! How can you know if she be married or single? She is a foreigner, by all accounts, lately come to the country.'

'She is a native of this country,' cried Kate. 'I have seen her before. She is disguised, but I cannot be mistaken in the cat-like movement. Her hair is dyed, but her eyes are the same. I cannot be mistaken in them. Oh, doctor!' she cried, 'this marriage must be stopped—she is utterly unworthy of Jack. What am I to do?'

The doctor pulled his moustache and looked puzzled.

'You are quite sure she has a husband living?' he at length inquired.

'Quite sure,' repeated Kate; and even as she spoke a cold thrill went to her heart, and the hand that rested on the doctor's arm trembled. Was Leslie dead? She had not heard anything of him for months; could he be dead? Could his soul leave this world and nothing tell her that they did not inhabit the same sphere? Impossible.'

The doctor noticed her silence and trembling and was more puzzled than before.

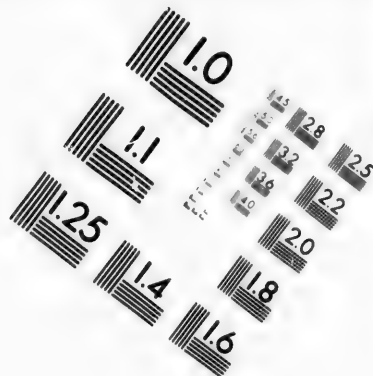
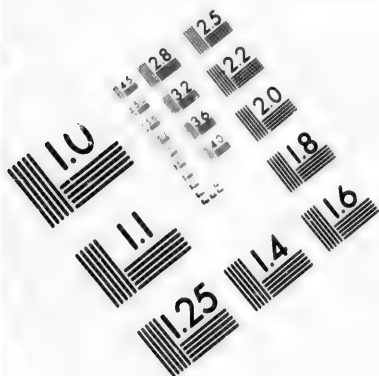
'Can you prove that this woman is married?' he questioned.

'I do not know' replied Kate, 'but I can try.' Then, after a pause, she added, 'Would it not do for you to tell him?'

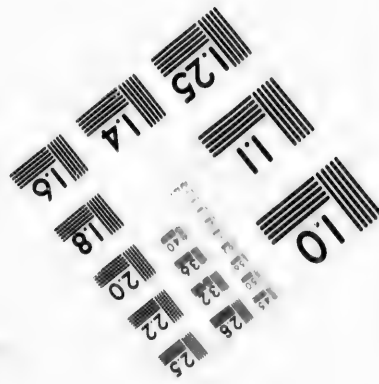
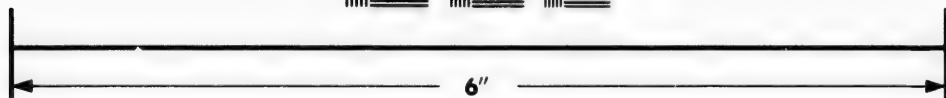
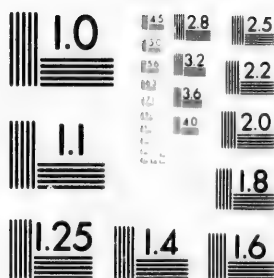
'Oh, certainly, I could tell him,' growled the doctor, 'and he would ask for my proofs, even if he did not punch my head on the spot. Then I refer him to you, and that would never do.'

'Why not?'





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‘My dear young lady, is it true that John Windermere has been a suitor for your hand?’

‘Quite true,’ replied Kate; ‘but I do not think it honourable to mention such matters. Please respect my confidence in this.’

‘In that case,’ said the doctor, without taking any notice of the latter part of her speech, ‘it would place you in a very awkward position if you interfered in this matter.’

‘You mean that people will talk, and say I am fond of Jack, and that I am actuated by petty spite, or something of that kind?’ queried Kate.

‘Yes, something of that kind,’ responded the doctor.

‘Well, I cannot help it if they do. To be supposed to be in love with John Windermere will not harm me nor any one else that I know of.’

The doctor looked curiously at her face in the starlight.

‘Well, of all the queer specimens of women that I have met this one is the most peculiar,’ he thought, and a feeling of admiration for the lonely girl, who could thus contemplate braving public opinion, swelled in his bosom.

‘My dear Miss Kate,’ he said, after a long pause; ‘it would not be of any use for you to interfere, unless you can produce proofs. It would be exposing yourself to public ridicule in vain.’

Kate quivered under his words, while he continued—

‘Why should you trouble yourself about John Windermere. He is old enough to know what he is about, and probably would not thank anyone for meddling with his affairs.’

'Oh, doctor! don't talk in that way,' cried Kate; 'it is horrible to think of Jack marrying her. She is a dreadful woman; it will ruin his whole life, and he is so good. It would be wicked of me, knowing what I do, to let it go on.'

'Miss Kate,' said the doctor impressively; 'if he is so good, and has found such favour with you, would you mind telling me why you did not accept him?'

'I—I—did not love him enough to marry him,' stammered Kate; 'and now if he marries this woman I shall feel as if it were my fault, and that I have been his ruin,' and the tears rose to her eyes as she again exclaimed, 'Oh, doctor! what shall I do?'

'I'm blessed if I quite know,' said the doctor; 'does not anyone else know of this affair save you? Where is her husband? He is the one that should be appealed to.'

Kate made no reply, she could not mention the name of Leslie Hargrave in connection with this wretched woman.

'Remember,' added the doctor, as they approached her home, 'that it is impossible for you to do anything in this matter personally. The wedding will not come off immediately, and in the meantime I will think what is best to be done. Are you sure that you are not mistaken in her identity?'

'Yes,' replied Kate; 'I cannot be mistaken. It is true that her hair was a light brown, and now it is black; but the eyes—no two women could have such eyes. I cannot be mistaken, she is Leslie's wife.' She uttered the name unthinkingly. 'Good night, and many thanks for your kindness,' she said, as she entered the house, while the doctor turned away, muttering—

'Leslie's wife. Here's another mystery. What does it all mean?' and many and varied thoughts passed through his mind as he wended his way home; while Kate, after giving Aunt Merryvale, who was waiting up for her, an account of the concert, retired to her room, to pace up and down, up and down, vainly trying to determine what to do, till exhaustion compelled her to seek her bed, when she fell into an uneasy sleep, and dreamed that she was in a church, and at the chancel knelt John Windermere and Selina Vincent. The clergyman pronounced the blessing, and as the pair rose from their knees they were slowly transformed, and John Windermere became Leslie Hargrave, and he looked with rapture upon his bride, who at that moment turned her face toward Kate, and Kate saw that it was the face of a fiend; and she wanted to shriek and could not; there was a choking sensation in her throat that prevented articulation. She awakened trembling with horror, great drops of moisture standing on her brow. Toward morning she again slept, and this time the visions of her brain took a new shape. She was sitting at the window watching Pearl, who was playing at the gate. The light of the setting sun fell on the golden head of the child like a glory. Suddenly a carriage drove up, and Selina Vincent sprang out, and, leaning over the gate, stretched out a claw-like hand, and, seizing the child by her glittering tresses, bore her away to the carriage and drove off. Again she tried to scream and could not; a hand of iron clasped her throat. She sprang up in bed and frantically beat the air before she became conscious that it was only a dream. There was no more sleep for her that night. An awful feeling of

horror haunted her. Selina Vincent had stolen the Pearl, and Leslie had left the child in her care that she might not be under the influence of her wretched mother, and she—how had she guarded the trust so strangely reposed in her? She had let the thought of the mother stand between them, and shut out the love she would otherwise have felt for the child. She saw, as in a vision, the little cherub face, the golden hair, the deep blue eyes so like Leslie's, the dimpled arms stretched towards her to be taken up, and she fell upon her knees and prayed that God would give her back her little waif, to be guarded in the future with a tenderer love.





## CHAPTER XII.

### LESLIE HARGRAVE'S SELF-UPBRAIDING.

'Oh ! days of youth, for thee my soul doth yearn ;  
Oh ! halcyon days, that never can return ;  
When pure of heart, from sin my conscience free,  
With longing eyes my soul looks back to thee.'

**A**T a late hour, one lovely night in October, a traveller paced the deck of one of the steamers that ply on our great chain of lakes. He wore a loose overcoat, and a soft felt hat, pressed closely on his head and drawn low on his forehead, shaded his face. His figure was proudly erect, and marked by the square shoulders and deep, broad chest, indicative of manly beauty. He paced the deck restlessly, and ever and anon he raised the hat from his brow as though its weight oppressed him, and passed his hand through his hair impatiently, and as he did so displayed in the light of a full moon rich brown locks that fell in waves on a brow rugged, but beautiful, with intellect akin to genius ; eyes of an intense limpid blue, a straight, prominent nose, with flexible nostrils, that expanded and contracted as he paused in his walk for a moment and sniffed the air like a war horse.

'I wonder what ails me to-night,' he thought; 'I feel as though I were haunted; turn where I will, her eyes look into mine, with that sad pleading look that I have seen in their depths, when something has troubled her; and three times to-night I have distinctly felt the clasp of her small hand on my arm, and I have turned to speak to her, and the empty space has mocked me. I never felt her presence so strongly as I do now, since the hour when we parted. Good God!' he muttered, as another thought struck him. 'Can she be dead, and her spirit here with me now? The air seems to tremble as though it were instinct with life.'

'My darling,' he whispered, though no sound was heard save the ripple at the prow of the vessel as she cut through the waves. 'My darling, where are you?'

He turned suddenly, as though feeling that some one was near him, and breathed in short, impatient gasps. Again he raised his hat from his brow, again swept back the heavy locks, and as he did so the moonlight fell full upon his face. He started, and drew forth his watch—it was the hour of eleven.

'Ah! now I know what this means. How could I for a moment forget? She is watching with me now, and she is sad. I know it by the inward pain I feel;' and as he gazed his heart was filled with unutterable yearning to behold once more the woman whose love he felt was his own, and whose life he had blighted.

'My darling, if I could but have you with me now, nothing earthly should part us. No law, human or divine, should compel me to cleave to one who is utterly



lost; while my pearl, my flow'ret, is left to battle with life alone.'

He paced up and down more excitedly than before.

'I will see her,' he muttered; 'before a week is over my head I will see her, and know why she is haunting me—why I feel this dreary pain.'

He walked the deck for hours, living over again his past life, his happy boyhood, his young unsullied manhood, his first meeting with Kate, who was so unlike the city belles of his acquaintance; he seemed to breathe the odour of wild flowers when near her. She was so girlish, so unsophisticated, so pure, so sweet; and he had not then been ashamed to offer her his heart's homage; and she, yes, she had loved him. Well he remembered the timid confession he had extorted from her, the look of love in the sweet eyes that fell beneath his glance. 'Oh, would to God!' he cried, 'that I could blot out the past from that hour; but it is impossible! impossible!'

It was like the wailing cry of a lost spirit, and it is the cry of thousands of others who, lured by the wiles of beauty or the glamour of wealth, listen to the voice of passion, or of Mammon, and lose

'The one woman, God's costliest gift.'

In the gray of the morning the vessel neared the landing at Oakhurst, and one of the passengers, after collecting his luggage, took the first train for C——, where he arrived in a few hours, and drove to 95 River street, entered with a latch key, and immediately ascended to his study. There were several letters lying on the table addressed to 'Leslie Hargrave, Esq.' He turned them over

one by one, and as he took up the last, a light leaped into his eyes, and his hand trembled as he hurriedly tore it open and read the few lines already seen by the reader, written by Kate Lindwood, telling him of the loss of the Pearl.

'Concise,' he muttered, and not one word of sympathy or affection in it.'

'The Pearl is lost,' he read, a dazed look coming into his face. 'It is her writing, though a little unsteady.'

'The Pearl is lost!' he repeated; 'what can be the meaning of this, and why has she notified me in this cool manner?'

After some moments of reflection he again soliloquized: 'I will find it. I shall go and see her. I have restrained myself a thousand times, and this restraint cannot go on forever. I shall go and see her. I shall hold her to my heart again. I shall kiss her lips ——'

He rose and walked excitedly up and down the room.

'Fool that I am,' he thought; 'she will stand cold and still before me, my pure love, and I shall not dare to touch her; but I shall go, I shall look upon her face again. I shall find my pearl. She cannot blame me now. Will she be angry? Kate be angry? Well, it will do me good if she is; I cannot feel any worse than I do now, no matter what happens.'

He rang the bell.

A few moments after a servant entered, not much surprised to see her master, as she was accustomed to his erratic movements.

'Jane,' he said, turning to her, 'attend to my satchel, please, and let me have clean linen.'

'Going away again, sir?'

'Yes.'

'Will you be here for dinner?'

'No. I leave in an hour. Let me have lunch—anything you have.'

The servant obeyed, and after a light refreshment, Leslie Hargrave again left his home, not this time to rove aimlessly about, but with the intention of making his way directly to Beeborough; and with this end in view we leave him on the first train that left the depot for places in that direction, and return to Dr. Annesley, who had been suddenly called away to attend the death-bed of an uncle a hundred miles distant.





## CHAPTER XIII.

DR. ANNESLEY'S RETURN—THE FRIENDS DISCUSS THE SITUATION—THEY  
ADJOURN TO THE SMALL HOUSE ON MAPLE STREET.

ON the evening of the day after the concert before mentioned, Dr. Annesley returned to Beeborough, and at once proceeded to the house of his friend, Dr. Dashwood. The doctor was at home when he arrived.

'Glad to see you back, James. Sit down, man, and make yourself comfortable,' and he pushed a large easy chair toward his friend.

'And now tell me all that has happened since you have been away. How about your uncle?'

'The poor old man is gone,' said Annesley, in a dreary tone.

'Why, man, your voice sounds as if it came from the grave of buried hopes. Surely he did not disinherit you after all?'

'He has left me heir to everything,' returned Annesley, quietly.

'Well, that is as it should be; then why are you so solemn?'

The doctor looked anxiously at his friend as he put the question.

'I cannot help wishing that I had braved his anger, and told him everything. I almost feel as though I had come into a fortune by fraud.'

'Nonsense, man,' cried the doctor, hotly. 'What is the use of taking notice of old men's whims? You are the rightful heir; that is beyond dispute, and had you told him about the marriage, not a screech of it would ever have been yours, so, as regards that there is nothing to lament about, but——'

The doctor fidgetted uneasily in his chair.

'How is Miss Linwood,' interrupted his friend, a change coming over his face as he spoke.

'Now it's coming,' thought the doctor, and he braced himself up, and pulled his moustache viciously, as he replied to this query:

'Not as well of late.'

'How? What has gone wrong?' returned Annesley, hurriedly.

'Trouble; and she will not get well while she is troubled.'

'What is she troubled about?'

'The Pearl.'

And the doctor felt a tightening about the chest and throat as he spoke.

'Pearl!' exclaimed Annesley, starting to his feet in some excitement. 'What of Pearl?'

'James,' said Dr. Dashwood, in a tone of deep feeling, rising and laying his hand gently on his friend's shoulder,

'James, we have been friends for years, and if we are to part now, remember I acted as I thought for the best.'

'In Heaven's name, Stephen, what do you mean? What of the Pearl?'

'She is lost,' cried the doctor in a husky voice.

'Lost, Stephen, and I not know it,' and he shook off the doctor's hand roughly.

'I could not tell you. If I had you would have been back by the first train, and that would have ruined all.'

'Ruined all,' repeated Annesley in an awful voice. 'Stephen, were you mad to think that any fortune could recompense me for the loss of Leslie's child?'

'I did not think it. I did not think it, James,' reiterated the poor doctor, almost stunned by the just anger of the friend he had known and loved from boyhood.

'I expect to find her. I have done everything mortal could do in the time, and have not traced her yet, but I will find her; my impression is that she has been stolen.'

'Stolen!' exclaimed Annesley in astonishment. 'Who should steal her?'

'I do not know,' said the doctor in a troubled voice; 'but evidence goes to prove that she was seen in a carriage with a lady and gentleman driving down Maple street,' and the doctor gave his friend a detailed account of all he knew, and it was not much, concerning the Pearl, and all he had done in the hope of tracing her, and concluded with,

'I have a vague suspicion of two strangers who have lately come to Beeborough,' and he mentioned Madame Rolandi and her companion, at the same time speaking of her approaching marriage with John Windermere.

'I don't quite like this sudden infatuation of Windermere's,' he added, 'I wish we knew something more of the lady.'

He said nothing of Kate's suspicions on the subject.

Annesley did not hear the last part of this speech; he caught the name, Rolandi's, and a lovely woman seen at a German watering place—a woman of unenviable reputation—passed before his mental vision.

'Is she—is Madame Rolandi here now?' he inquired.

'Yes. I was telling you she is shortly to be married to Windermere.'

'Can I see her anywhere without her seeing me?'

The doctor mused for a moment.

'Do you know her?'

'I think so.'

'Do you think she is concerned in the abduction of the Pearl?'

'It is possible.'

'Then you may sit behind the curtain in that window,' pointing to one in an angle of the house, 'at ten to-morrow morning, and you will see her as she passes down the gravel path. She is coming to consult me at that hour. She preferred coming here to having me call at her hotel.'

'What hotel does she stay at?' asked Annesley.

'The Royal.'

Annesley made a few notes in his pocket-book, and then said,

'Now I will go and call on Miss Lindwood, and perhaps I may glean something more to help me.' Here a small boy came in and announced that tea was waiting.

'Better take a cup of tea first, James,' said the doctor,

'and then I will walk up with you; it will be a more seasonable time, and I want to see Miss Kate.'

'Is she ill?' inquired Annesley.

'No—not exactly ill. She is a puzzle to me. Lately I have thought Helena fondest of the child, but there is no comparison between the anxiety of the two concerning her loss. Kate is getting more thin and hollow-eyed than I like to see her.'

After tea the two walked up to the small house on Maple street.

The family were assembled in the sitting-room, all save the golden-haired, blue-eyed Pearl.

The greetings were kindly, but there was a gloom that even Aunt Merryvale could not dispel, though her face was as bright, and her quaint sayings quaint as ever.

Helena was reclining in an easy chair. The pleasure of seeing Dr. Annesley again had brought a flush to her cheek, and after a few moments general conversation, he took a seat by her side, questioned her about her health, and talked with her about the Pearl, and as he saw the tears come into her eyes, he whispered in a fervent tone,

'Heaven bless you for your sympathy.'

Helena blushed and scarcely knew what to say, when their attention was drawn to Aunt Merryvale, whose voice was raised as she replied to something Dr. Dashwood was saying.

'I've prayed that she may be brought back to us safe and sound. I think it a reasonable request, and as long as I pray for things reasonable, I have faith to believe my prayers will be answered. I've done all I can to find her, and now I intend to wait patiently until I find any-



thing more to do. I've fretted enough in my life, and I've seen the folly of it; it does nothing but make one old and ugly before one's time. The child will turn up again all right before long.'

Having finished this speech, Aunt Merryvale resumed her knitting, her usual evening occupation, and as she did so drew her lips together in a manner which said as plainly as words could speak: 'So there's an end of the matter,' while Dr. Dashwood turned to Kate, who sat apart by the window and looked worn and haggard, and for some time they conversed in a low tone; at last Annesley, whose ears were on the alert, caught the following:

'I dreamed last night that I saw her carry away the Pearl, and I feel it is true.'

'But, my dear Miss Kate, where is the motive?'

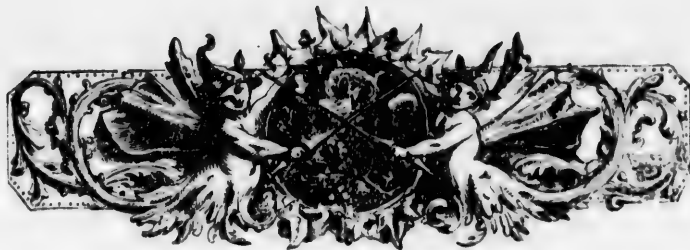
She bent closer to the doctor and whispered:

'She is the mother of Pearl, and ———, oh, I cannot tell you any more, doctor; surely that is enough?'

The doctor opened his eyes wide with amazement, while an exclamation passed his lips which sounded very much like an oath. He took Kate's hand in his, and felt her pulse carefully, and after a pause replied:

'It is quite sufficient, and I shall act accordingly.'

Shortly after this the gentlemen took their leave, and on their way home laid their plans for the recovery of the Pearl. Whatever anger Dr. Annesley felt at being kept in the dark melted away when he heard the efforts his friend had made, and was still making, to discover the missing child, and the two men were working together like brothers to solve the mystery.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE DETECTIVE—THE MEETING OF LESLIE AND KATE.

**N**EXT morning, a little before ten, found Dr. Annesley at the window, where he got a full view of the garden path. He had not waited long when a carriage drove up to the gate and a lady alighted, and passed the window where he sat watching.

‘It is she,’ he exclaimed under his breath, ‘and as beautiful as ever. I marvel that a creature so lovely can be so wicked.’

As soon as the door of the doctor’s office was closed he seized his hat, and went to the telegraph office, and in ten minutes the chief of police in C—— received a message requesting that a man in plain clothes be sent to the Royal Hotel, Beeborough, where he would receive his instructions.

The next day Thomas Dobson, Esq., arrived at the Royal Hotel, and later was called upon by Dr. Dashwood, who claimed him as an old acquaintance, and took him home to spend the evening, where, contrary to his usual custom, the doctor entertained him with all the gossip of

Beeborough, Dr. Annesley making a good listener and dropping in a word occasionally.

At a late hour he returned to the hotel, and there we shall leave him and transfer the reader to the evening before the day fixed for the marriage of John Windermere with the beautiful Madame Rolandi.

On this evening a stranger arrived by the seven o'clock train and drove to the Albion House, when having rested a short time and taken some refreshment, he again sallied forth, and inquiring his way, shortly appeared before the small house on Maple street.

He paused irresolute with his hands on the gate, when just at that moment the street door opened, and the form of Kate Lindwood appeared for a moment in full relief against a back-ground of light; the next, the door closed, and she moved down the path towards the stranger who leaned against the gate-post, watching her, with his soul in his eyes and words of endearment trembling on his lips, for Leslie Hargrave had not seen her for years, and memories of the past were busy in his brain.

She was dressed in some dark material, and a light gossamer scarf thrown over her head fell in loose folds upon her shoulders. Her head was bent down and her whole attitude bespoke extreme dejection.

As she neared the gate she came so close to Leslie that he could have touched her; then she retraced her steps, and he was on the point of following her, and had passed through the gate, when she turned again, and standing in the shadow of a tree he waited her approach. Her head was bent as before, and she did not see him, and as she turned again he uttered her name in a low muffled tone,

too much overcome by the sight of this woman whom he loved, and the bitter recollection of how he had lost her, to be able to articulate plainly.

She started on hearing her name, and looked up. The moonlight fell full upon her face, while his own was in shadow.

That face with its wondrous purity of expression acted upon him like a spell, and he seemed as though riveted to the spot.

'Who calls me?' she asked in a trembling tone, as she advanced a step nearer.

'I, Leslie.'

She moved hurriedly forward, and laying her hand on his shoulder in a manner that bespoke the utmost confidence and affection, said in a tone of intense relief:

'Oh! I'm so glad you've come.'

'Are you really glad to see me, Kate?' He said with a rising excitement in his tone as he took her hand.

'Oh! so glad,' she repeated, 'so glad; now all will be well.'

'All will be well,' repeated Leslie, a gleam of wild joy lighting up his face; 'for heaven's sake, Kate, tell me what you mean?'

In a moment the thought had flashed through his brain that Selina was dead, and he released from his bonds; or that Kate would consent to marry him if he obtained a divorce, a question he had not dared to ask her, though he had been often sorely tempted.

Kate alarmed by his excited manner, moved a step from him and remained silent.

'All what,' he repeated, a chill creeping over him.

'I have been so miserable the last few weeks. I have not known what to do,' returned the girl in a troubled tone.

'Leslie,' she continued, as she again laid her hand on his arm, 'I am afraid I am going to pain you; but I cannot help it, I need your assistance.'

'In what way?' he questioned, a presentiment of evil creeping over him.

'Leslie, your wife is in Beeborough.'

He recoiled as though he had received a blow, and leant against the tree for support, while Kate looked at him with pitying eyes, as she continued —

'Selina is in Beeborough, and is going to be married to John Windermere to-morrow.'

'She is nothing to me,' cried Leslie in a hoarse voice; 'she may marry whom she will, I shall not interfere. I never want to see her face or hear her name. You will oblige me by not speaking of her to me again.'

'I must, Leslie; John Windermere cannot marry her.'

'Why not, if he wishes to,' retorted Leslie, savagely; 'I have no desire to stand in the way of his happiness,' he added with a bitter laugh.

'It would not be right for me to allow it when I know she has a husband living.'

'She has no husband. I disown her forever.'

Kate's courage began to rise as she found herself thwarted in what she considered the cause of right.

'Leslie,' she continued, 'I have known John from childhood, and I cannot remain silent and see his whole life ruined.'

'You take great interest in this John Windermere,' he retorted bitterly. 'What is he to you that you feel so tender about him?'

Kate made no reply. She either could not or would not speak.

'Is he a lover of yours? Has she come in between you, as she did once before?'

He grasped her arm, and, looking in her troubled face, laughed a horrible laugh, that had in it all the bitterness of jealousy and the agony of shame. 'Let her alone,' he continued, 'and she'll serve me a better turn than she thinks. Who knows but I may live to bless her yet?'

He spoke wildly, recklessly. Jealousy, fierce and strong, held dominion over him.

'Leslie,' said Kate, with all the firmness she could bring to her aid, though her voice trembled, 'it is useless now to talk of the past; this is a thing of the present, a choice between right and wrong; one of us two must take steps to prevent this marriage, and now that you are here is it well to leave it to me?'

Stung into greater bitterness by her quiet determination, which he thought sprang from love for John Windermere, he exclaimed:

'You are right, madam! It is my part to interfere; to claim as a wife a woman who has disgraced me, and has been living an evil life for years, that you may have your lover return to you; it is a just reparation for the wrong I have done you. I will proclaim from the street corners and the housetops that this degraded woman is my wife, if that will satisfy you, and

never fear but your recreant lover will return to his allegiance, and you will marry him, and I wish you joy.'

He turned to depart, went a few steps, and came back again, and stood looking at her with an expression of passionate pain in his eyes. 'I shall never see her again,' he thought. He moved a step nearer.

'Say good-bye, Kate, before I go.'

She did not seem to hear him; her eyes were fixed on some object afar off.

'Say good-bye, Kate,' he repeated; 'and kiss me once; it will be the last time; kiss me once before I go. It will not harm you, and it will make me feel better.'

She made no reply; she did not even turn her eyes upon him.

Suddenly he stretched out his arms and gathered her to his bosom. He turned her face to the moonlight, and bent to imprint a kiss upon her lips, when he was struck by the death-like pallor of her face, the closed eyes, and the limp form that hung heavily on his arm. She had fainted. A sudden revulsion of feeling came over him. He laid her on a garden seat that was near by, and passed his hand over the dew-wet grass, and moistened her forehead, while he murmured words of endearment mingled with self-upbraiding.

'My darling, I would not harm you for the world. I did not mean to frighten you; but why did you raise this devil of jealousy? It is past now; open your sweet eyes and look at me again before I go. Waken, my darling; I will not attempt to kiss you now. Waken.'

The long, dark lashes quivered, and he moved a little apart, while she regained complete consciousness. She

made an effort to rise, and he sprang forward to assist her, while he hurriedly exclaimed—

‘Pardon me, my darling, pardon me! I did not kiss you. I could not. I am unworthy even to look at you. Good-night;’ and before she could utter a word he had gone; he did not hear her faint cry:—

‘Leslie! The Pearl! the Pearl!’



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## CHAPTER XV.

MRS. BEECH TELLS A TALE--KATE'S SILENT ANGUISH--'ONLY A LITTLE WHILE'--A LIGHT COMES TO AUNT MERRYVALE.

THE day succeeding the events mentioned in our last chapter, every gossip in Beeborough was talking over the strange scene that took place at the Royal Hotel the evening before, which, in passing from mouth to mouth, at length reached the ears of little Mrs. Beech, who, filled with news which she thought very funny, immediately donned her walking attire, and proceeded on her way to unburden herself to the three ladies who lived on Maple street.

Aunt Merryvale and Kate were in the room when she entered, and flinging herself into a chair threw up her hands and exclaimed,

'Such a queer thing has happened! Do guess.'

'I never could guess anything,' said Aunt Merryvale, while Kate remained silent, and her face that was pale before turned paler still.

'Well,' continued Mrs. Beech, excitedly, 'this is the day that John Windermere was to have been married to Madame Rolandi, the singer, and I went, with some friends

of mine, at ten this morning to witness the ceremony. There was a great crowd outside the church, but the doors were locked, and after waiting a long time the sexton came and announced that there would be no wedding to-day. Of course we were all very curious, and I did not hear till a few minutes ago what had happened to put it off.

'I am very glad it is put off,' said Aunt Merryvale. John is too young to know his own mind; and matrimony is rather too serious a thing to rush into after only a few weeks' acquaintance with a woman whom nobody knows.'

'Ah, that's just where the trouble was,' continued Mrs. Beech. No one did know. It appears that about nine o'clock last evening a stranger arrived at the Royal Hotel and enquired for Madame Rolandi. He was shown up to the drawing-room where she was entertaining several ladies and gentlemen, and among them John Windermere, who was bending over her and talking in a low tone. Their conversation was cut short by the stranger advancing and claiming her as his wife before the assembled company, and requesting her to prepare to leave Beeborough by the eleven o'clock train. Dreadful, wasn't it? I think how I should have felt if any one had come to take me away from Joseph the evening before we were married, and, what Joseph would have thought. It's really too funny to think of. Those present say Madame flew into an awful rage, and vowed she would not be dictated to by him, and that her eyes glared like a tigress, but he whispered something in her ear, and she calmed down and left the room to prepare for the journey.

I wonder what he could have said to her, and if he really is her husband. They say John Windermere never said a word ; he seemed bewildered, and a friend of his took him home.'

'What a miserable ending to John's love affair,' said Aunt Merryvale. 'I never believe in these dazzlements ; they never come to any good. It is better to fall in love in a quiet, respectable way, and marry in a reasonable time, instead of bringing things to a climax in such a hurry that it is enough to take one's breath away to think of it.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Beech, 'Joseph and I were engaged a whole year before we were married. I did not mind waiting, only I was afraid I should be so old.'

'Indeed,' said Aunt Merryvale.

'Yes, my sister Sarah was married at sixteen.'

'You seem very much advanced in your ideas,' said Aunt Merryvale, with a twinkle in her eye. 'It is generally supposed that a girl is young up to twenty, then she begins to feel old, and between twenty-five and thirty is very old, particularly if single. After thirty she begins to get young again.'

Mrs. Beech stared.

'I assure you it is so. I feel quite young, and so will you if you live long enough ; but we all have to go through this old stage of feeling. It is not pleasant ; but there is no help for it. We all do it, and we all wish when it is over that there had not been any necessity for it. It produces in many cases irritability, and brings crow's feet and wrinkles before their time, and is all much ado about

nothing. What was the husband like?' she enquired, returning to the former subject of conversation.

'I don't know,' said Mrs. Beech. 'Something dreadful, I believe. They say he looked as black as a thundercloud. I suppose the poor little thing wanted to get away from him, but of course it was very wicked if he really was her husband; and I suppose he must have been, or she would not have gone away with him.'

'They did go then?' queried Aunt Merryvale.

'Yes. And that reminds me that I heard an accident happened to the night train, and several people were killed, and many wounded.'

All the time this conversation had been carried on between Mrs. Beech and Aunt Merryvale, Kate had been working or pretending to work on a piece of embroidery while listening attentively to all that was said. At mention of the accident the work fell from her hands, and she stared at Mrs. Beech with such a look of horror on her face that that lady exclaimed.—

'Why, goodness, Kate! You look as though you had lost every friend you had in the world. Railway accidents are so common now, that we do not think anything of them, unless someone we know gets hurt.'

'If we do not know the killed and wounded, there are those who will,' said Aunt Merryvale in a tone of rebuke.

'Quite true,' said Mrs. Beech. Then after a few moments silence, she added,

"Wouldn't it be funny if that dreadful man was killed and Madam Rolandi came back and married John Windermere, and they lived happy everafter? Wouldn't it, though?"

Kate could bear no more. She rose and left the room, regardless of the sharp look which her aunt directed towards her as she did so. She sought her chamber, and entering closed and locked the door, and throwing herself on the bed stared up at the ceiling with wide opened tearless eyes, before which every conceivable horror passed like scenes in a panorama.

The shock of the trains as they met, for thus she pictured it, the cars in ruins, the track and vicinity strewn with the killed and wounded; and Leslie—her Leslie—mangled, bleeding, dying, and Selina unhurt bending over him with the look of triumphant malice in her face that Kate so well remembered.

All this and much more passed before the mind's eye of the wretched girl, and a feeling akin to despair crept over her.

There was a knock at the door, but she did not heed it. In imagination she was holding Leslie's head on her bosom and smoothing the dark tangled locks from his brow, as she told him there would be no more parting in heaven, and that she would go to him soon, there to be united forever.

Another knock, and another, and she mechanically rose, and opening the door admitted Aunt Merryvale.

'Kate?' began the old lady.

'Yes, aunt,' in a voice so changed that Mrs. Merryvale started at the sound.

'Kate, look at me.'

The girl raised a pair of dull agonized eyes to her aunt's face.

Never did Aunt Merryvale forget that look, so calm, so dull, so despairing.

'Kate,' continued the old lady as she laid her hand tenderly on her niece's shoulder, 'I have known ever since I came here that you were not happy, that something had gone wrong with your life. I do not seek to know what it is, but if there is anything I can do to lighten the weight, tell me and I will help you.'

'Yes, aunt,' said Kate, answering at random in the same dull tone as before.

'There are trials and sorrows in every life,' continued Aunt Merryvale. 'We all suffer according to our strength. The weak in a pining way, the strong as though the torture must rend soul from body in the intensity of mental anguish; and all have a like consolation. This world is but a school to fit the soul for the next. I have suffered about all I could suffer and live, and please God I will never fret again. One day I read from a paper these lines; and they have been a comfort ever since,' and in a tone of deep feeling she repeated the following lines.—

"Only a little while,  
'Till passion and pain are o'er;  
Only a few short years,  
And we meet to part no more.

"Only a little while  
'Till we meet in bliss supreme,  
Only a little while  
And the past will be a dream.

"Only a little time  
For submission, patience, prayer,  
Only a little more  
For the tortured heart to bear.

“Only a little while  
For the silent tears to fall ;  
Only a little while  
And the turf will cover all.”

As the old lady concluded, she saw the glitter of tears in Kate's eyes, and kissing her affectionately, silently left the room, and going to that of Helena, tapped lightly on the door and entered.

Helena had just awakened from her afternoon nap. She had been dreaming of James Annesley, and a soft, tremulous smile played on her lips, the reflex of a joy within.

‘Only a six inch partition between happiness and misery,’ mused Aunt Merryvale, as she thought of the face she had just left, and contrasted it with the one before her.

‘How changed is Helena since I came here to live. What a bliss and a torture is love,’

‘Helena, my dear, will you please arrange your dress and come into the sitting room and entertain any one who may call. Kate has a bad headache and cannot be disturbed, and I am going out.’

‘Yes, aunt,’ said Helena, languidly, not liking to be roused from her pleasing revery.

Aunt Merryvale put on her bonnet and mantle, and sallied forth, intent on gleaning all she could concerning the accident. She began to see ‘as through’ a glass, darkly’ the secret grief of her favourite niece, and hoped to pick up some crumbs of comfort by the way.

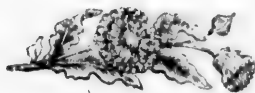
‘Who,’ she asked herself, ‘was Madame Rolandi, and



who was her husband, "that dreadful man," as Mrs. Beech called him, and what had they to do with Kate?' And she thought of Kate's visit to C——, and tried to recall what she had then heard of Kate's engagement to somebody, which she had treated as idle gossip.

'Well, one thing is certain, be this man dreadful or not, Kate loves him with a great love, and he has a wife living. Merciful Heaven!' thought the old lady, 'what is to be done in a case like this? I like to see people happy, but where is the happiness to come from in this case. I've kept my eyes open as I came through life, and I believe the single life may be just as happy as the married, if people would only think so, but who could persuade a young girl to believe it, whose only thought of happiness is being always with him she loves. I doubt not it will be best if he is killed, as Kate seems to forebode. It will be one big wrench instead of a life-long gnawing at the heart.'

Thus musing we leave Mrs. Merryvale on her way to the telegraph office, while we follow Leslie Hargrave and his wife on their journey.







## CHAPTER XVI.

SELINA TRIES TO REGAIN HER INFLUENCE OVER LESLIE—THE DETECTIVE AT WORK—DEATH OF THE WOMAN-FIEND.

**S**ELINA HARGRAVE, *alias* Rolandi, paced the long room at the Beeborough station, waiting for the train, which was half an hour late. She was alone. The scene at the hotel had not subdued her, it had only altered her plans. True, she was in Leslie Hargrave's power, and she was afraid of him; but already she was scheming to extricate herself. How had he learned that little business she had managed for Captain Fitzgerald, when by a simple scratch of the pen they had gained sufficient money to support them for some months while on the Continent. Leslie had dared to call it forgery. People had died before now for uttering such words, and 'What has been done can be done again,' thought Selina.

'By the way, that would be a suitable work for Celestine. I must look her up; she took fright and left the hotel as soon as she saw me in trouble. I dare say she expects, now, to have the child speculation all to herself;

but she is mistaken. Poor fool, I must find her, she will be useful to me.'

Here her meditations were cut short by the entrance of Leslie.

'I am going to get tickets, madame,' he said; 'where do you wish to go?'

Her plans were laid on the instant. This woman, who had never known the meaning of the word failure, where conquest was concerned, at once made up her mind that she would be taken back to her husband's bosom for the present, and let circumstances decide the future; and she answered his query almost instantaneously by falling on her knees and raising her fascinating eyes glittering with tears to his face, begged to be forgiven and taken back.

'Oh! Leslie,' she entreated, 'I have been so wretched since I left you. Take me back! take me back!' and she attempted to clasp his knees, but he recoiled as from an evil thing.

'Don't touch me,' he cried in an awful voice, 'or I shall curse you.'

She knew not that Kate was in Beeborough. That he had held her to his heart but a few hours before, or she might not have made this futile attempt to regain his love.

She rose from her knees white with passion, and her eyes glared as she said:

'You shall repent this to the last day of your life.'

Leslie was too chivalrous to retort upon a woman, yet he might have thought that it was she who had need of repentance.

'You forget yourself, madame,' he said calmly. It was the calmness of despair.

'Shall I take your ticket for C——?'

'Yes,' replied she, tartly.

This was not what Leslie wished, but he laid his own plans accordingly. He should not return to C——.

He left the waiting room and procured a ticket for Selina for C——, and another for himself for Lorne, a station about midway, where there was a branch line. He had not yet decided where to go; but anywhere where she was not, and he could breathe freely.

The scream of the whistle sounded weird and wild as it was borne to his ears upon the still night air; and presently a long train drew up at the station, and he and his companion entered the first car, and as they did so a woman in a long dark ulster, who had been standing in the shadow of the station, passed quickly by and entered the last car; and as the train moved from the platform two men appeared from different directions and stepped on as it slowly retreated. One of these, a tall, slight man made his way to the last car, and seating himself behind the woman in the ulster, appeared to settle himself for a nap, while the other proceeded to the first car, where he ascertained, as only detectives know how, that Madame Rolandi had a ticket for C——. He eyed Leslie, who sat a few seats from her, curiously.

'Poor devil,' he thought. 'Well, a man can't have everything. She is certainly a beauty to look at. Pretty women are exposed to more temptations than plain ones; he ought to be merciful to her, and yet I fear she is a thorough bad one.' The detective after gaining all the

information he required, proceeded to the end of the last car but one, where he sat down and appeared to be ruminating deeply.

During this time the train had stopped at three stations, and was approaching the fourth, when the tall man whom we left in the last car, suddenly entered and grasping the detective's arm exclaimed,

'It is as you say, her ticket is taken up and she gets off at the next station; come.'

'The two men left the car and stood upon the steps; they sprang off as the car drew up to the platform, and watched the woman come off the train and proceed directly up into the town, one following her closely, while the other kept them in sight.

The train glided away from the station, winding round a curve like a fiery snake and carrying with it Leslie Hargrave and the beautiful degraded creature, who, according to law, was all that he could claim as a wife; and the law now, if he appealed to it would release him, but where would be the use. He knew Kate's views too well to think she would marry a man who had been divorced from his wife, and his disgrace was quite sufficiently known without making it more public by a suit in court by which nothing could be gained. She had left him and he would never take her back. He loathed the sight of her, yet he believed at this moment she thought he was going with her to C—. She had looked faded and worn, and he had placed her wraps about her carefully that she might rest, and had then retreated to the last car, to get as far from her as possible.

'What is the use of staying with her,' he thought, 'a few

more stations, and I leave her, I trust, forever. She must go her way, and I mine, and may God have mercy on us both.'

He had claimed her as his wife in obedience to Kate's wish, and insisted on her leaving Beeborough at once, for fear she should learn Kate's whereabouts of which he felt sure she was ignorant; though how in so small a place she had remained so he could not tell, and the demon jealousy again became rampant in his bosom as he thought.

'Kate must have been fond of John Windermere, and he must have known it, hence his reticence in not speaking of her to the woman he intended to marry, and what so natural as that he should seek as a solace to his wounded feelings, the society of another, whom he already knows loves him,' thought Leslie, 'and I have paved the way for his happiness by dispelling his infatuation for Selina.'

'Good God!' he exclaimed. 'When shall I ever be able to coolly contemplate the thought of Kate belonging to another. Never, never, while I breathe the breath of life. She is mine. Soul of my soul. I will never give her up. I will——'

An awful crash cut the sentence short, and Leslie Hargrave was hurled violently to the other side of the car, where he lay insensible, while men and women clambered over him, shrieking and groaning pitiously.

When he recovered consciousness, he was lying with a number of others on the damp turf by the side of the track. A woman, one of God's angels of mercy, was raising his head to place something under it, that he might be more comfortable, and seeing him open his eyes, she exclaimed,

'Doctor, he is not dead. Do look at him for a moment, and tell me what I can do for him.'

The soft heart of the country girl, who lived near by, and had come to the wreck to do what she could to alleviate suffering, was touched by the grand beauty of Leslie's death-like face. The doctor turned and gave him some brandy from a flask which he carried with him.

'Get something to cover him up with, if you can,' he said, 'and if he speaks ask him where he would like to be taken to, and then come and help me; there are others worse off than he, who must be attended to first.'

As the doctor turned away, Leslie raised himself on one elbow and looked round. His first thought was of Kate, and would he live to see her again. His second of Selina, and what had become of her. He did not wish her dead. The thought of that delicate form crushed and bleeding was horrible to him; but he must know what had become of her.

Dead or living, it seemed to him in his prostrate state, it would be the same—she would always come between him and Kate; the very thought of her seemed a barrier.

The girl bent to catch his words as he spoke low and with effort.

'Tell me about the accident.'

'Dreadful,' replied the girl with a shudder; 'a great many killed.'

Leslie groaned.

'Had you any friends with you?' she enquired.

'No.'

There was a pause of some moments when he spoke yet more faintly.

'Were all the cars thrown off the track?'

'Yes, all.'

'Were any hurt in the first car?'

'The first car was thrown off the track, and I think not many injured. The second car was smashed to atoms, and all, I believe, killed.'

'Stop,' said Leslie; 'don't tell me any more.'

'Poor Selina,' he thought, 'she may have escaped.'

'Help me to rise. No, it's no use,' as he made an ineffectual effort. 'There was a lady in the first car in a broad brimmed hat with black feathers and a black velvet jacket; find her and ask her to come to me.'

The girl left him and commenced her search among the living, some of whom were sitting in groups crying, some trying to aid the wounded. Then she searched among the wounded, and lastly the dead whose bodies had been recovered from the wreck; then she returned to her charge.

'Will she not come?' he asked in a whisper, as she returned alone.

'No,' said the girl gently.

'Go again and tell her it is I, Leslie, who wish to speak to her.'

'She will not come,' said the girl in an awe-struck voice; 'she is dead.'

Leslie turned away his face, and breathed with difficulty; presently he asked—

'Was she crushed, mangled?'

'No, she looked very lovely. I could see nothing but

a little cut upon her temple; she must have died instantly.'

'Without a moment to prepare for the great change,' thought Leslie. 'Poor Selina.'

He seemed so near to death himself that he had no room in his heart for anything but pity. The thought of his own shortcomings was too present with him in that hour of horror for him to think harshly of her.

'She has sinned deeply,' he thought, 'but who has not? All will be weighed in the balance and found wanting; and while I am found wanting, have I any right to pass judgment on her, when in the sight of a just God I may be equally sinful. She sinned in the beginning, in her desire to be revenged on her fellow-woman, and I fell through a passion that was a foul dishonour to the God who made me. I never loved Selina; there was but one woman in the world for me, and I have lost her. I may not live, and if I do, I can never seek her, my pure love, I feel farther away from her now than ever. I wonder if I am going to die; the sense of my sin haunts me more than ever before, it clings to me like a leprosy that must set me apart from her forever. If she knew where I am now, my pitying love, she would come to me.'

He turned his face up to the silent stars and appeared to be praying; and there we will leave him while we return to Beeborough and Aunt Merryvale.







## CHAPTER XVII.

SAYINGS AND DOINGS IN THE SMALL HOUSE ON MAPLE STREET—  
KATE CONFIDES IN AUNT MERRYVALE—DR. DASHWOOD IS BE-  
WILDERED—NEWS OF THE PEARL.

**A**UNT MERRYVALE did not return home till late in the evening, and when she did so she brought with her the *Evening Chronicle*. Tea was waiting, and had been waiting for some time. Helena was sitting by the fire feeling neglected and irritable.

‘How long you have been, auntie,’ she said. ‘It’s so lonely all by oneself. I thought you must have stayed out to tea, and that we would not wait for you, and I went to Kate to tell her so, and she was lying on her bed, and I knew she was fretting about the Pearl; I knew by the sound of her voice.’

‘Probably she was,’ said Aunt Merryvale, musingly. She was not thinking of what her niece was saying.

‘It’s foolish for Kate to fret so about a child that was nothing to her, though she was a sweet little thing; and after having her so long, I would not have parted with her for any consideration,’ and she put her handkerchief to her eyes in which the tears glistened.

Aunt Merryvale murmured an assent ; she was glancing over the paper.

'I am sure,' Helena continued, 'I was as fond of the Pearl as Kate ; and yet I don't hide away and fret, as she has been doing ever since the Pearl was missing, and refuse to eat and make everyone miserable.'

'True,' said Aunt Merryvale, 'I don't feel very brilliant myself to-night. What did you say about Kate ?'

'That she is making me very miserable. She said just now, when I went to her, that she could not come to tea, and did not need any.'

'Kate is not well,' said Aunt Merryvale. 'You must try and be patient with her. I trust the Pearl will shortly be found, and all will come right.'

'Fretting will not bring her back,' said Helena.

'No, and fretting would not make you well when you were ill,' said her Aunt, with some asperity, 'and yet you fretted, and Kate bore with your complainings for years. Cannot you bear with her for a little while ? She is ill and must have rest and quiet. Now, brighten up,' continued the old lady, 'or we will all be crying together, and that will never do. I feel as if I had about all I can bear just now. We are all apt to think our own troubles greater than other people's, and I don't know why I should be an exception to the rule. I find this household rather hard to manage in this particular crisis, and I wish you would say something to soothe me instead of rasping on my nervous system with childish complaints. There now, I'm not angry with you,' as she saw the tears in Helena's eyes. 'I'm only worried and I'm not an angel, and I have to flash up occasion-

ally, or I should choke. Life is not all happiness, as I know from having lived sixty years, and all we can do is to bear our little sorrows patiently, and be thankful for the little bright beams of joy that drop in between. Now, child, pour me out a cup of tea, and I will take it to Kate.'

At this moment the door opened and Kate entered the room. She had heard her aunt's voice, and could bear the suspense no longer. She must know all about the accident. Her figure wavered as she walked, as one who is weak after a long illness. Her face was ghastly pale; two deep purple marks under her eyes only added to her unearthly beauty. She was perfectly calm, and as she looked at Aunt Merryvale her lips moved in the effort to speak, but no sound came from them. Helena looked frightened and began to cry, and her aunt for a moment was perfectly appalled; she had never seen grief take this form before. She recovered herself quickly, however, and taking Kate's hand led her back to her room, and laying her on her bed, began to loosen her clothes as she said, soothingly:

'My dear girl, things are not as bad as you suppose. Leslie is not killed, only a little hurt.'

The revulsion of feeling, accompanied by her aunt's caressing tone, was too much for the girl, whose nerves were strung to the highest pitch of endurance. For a few moments she gasped for breath, and her aunt thought she was dying; then a long, wailing cry escaped her lips, which terminated in deep sobbing, and at last, to Aunt Merryvale's intense relief, in what she called a good, natural, womanly crying fit.

Aunt Merryvale did not know the name of Madame Rolandi's husband, but she remembered that Kate had raved about Leslie in her illness, and seeing the name 'Leslie Hargrave, Esq., of C——,' among the wounded, felt sure he was the cause of Kate's look of horror when told of the accident.

When Kate had somewhat recovered, her aunt read aloud the account in the *Evening Chronicle*, how there had been a collision; the list of killed and wounded as far as then known; among the wounded, 'Leslie Hargrave, Esq., not fatally'; among the killed 'Madame Rolandi, the beautiful Italian singer.'

'Poor Selina,' said Kate, her tears falling like rain. 'I wonder if she had any warning of what was coming; if she had a moment for repentance, a moment to ask for mercy from her God.'

'Was it true that she had a husband living when she engaged herself to marry John Windermere?' asked Aunt Merryvale.

'Perfectly true,' said Kate, and she then told her aunt of her own engagement to Leslie, how he had been beguiled by the fascinations of Selina, and all the reader already knows.

'Why did you not tell me this before?' queried Aunt Merryvale.

'I could not, auntie. You will be shocked when I tell you that although he was married I loved him just as much as ever. I loved him before, and I could not kill my love; though at first I thought it was dead, but it all came back to me, and I thank my God at this moment,

that I have never ceased to love him, never grown hard and bitter. Are you dreadfully shocked ?'

'No,' said Aunt Merryvale, in a low, soft voice. She was thinking of the one love of her life, the young husband so early taken from her, and to whom she hoped to be reunited at no distant day.

'Helena would be dreadfully shocked ; she would think me very wicked.'

'We will not tell her,' said Aunt Merryvale.

'But, auntie,' said Kate, with an imploring look in her haggard eyes, 'I must go to him ; he will need me. I cannot rest here ; I must see him.'

'My dear, you who have borne so much, can you not for his sake bear a little more ?'

'If I knew he was getting well, but I cannot think of the possibility of his passing from this world to the next without seeing him again. He was so unhappy yesterday.'

'Yesterday !' repeated Aunt Merryvale, 'did you see him yesterday ?'

'Yes,' said Kate, faintly. 'Don't be shocked, auntie,' as she thought she saw a change in her aunt's face. 'It was only for a few minutes at the gate when he came just in time to save John Windermere, and he left so hurriedly I did not tell him of the loss of the Pearl, though I tried to.'

'What has he to do with the Pearl ?' demanded Aunt Merryvale, in a puzzled tone.

'She is his child,' cried Kate, excitedly, 'and he sent her to me, that she might not be reared by her wretched mother.'

'Ah!' ejaculated Aunt Merryvale, a light breaking in upon her; 'and that was why you so much wished to keep her.'

'Yes, auntie,' responded Kate meekly; 'and now she is lost and he does not know it. What can I do?'

'Dr. Dashwood told me this evening that the policeman was on her track, and there was every prospect of her immediate recovery.'

'Oh, I hope so, I hope so,' cried Kate. 'It would never do to tell her father now. The anxiety might prevent his recovery. Oh, auntie,' she pleaded, clasping her hands together, as she lay on her bed, too weak to rise, 'how am I to hear from him? Help me.'

'I will,' said Aunt Merryvale. 'Leave it to me; and now I will bring you a cup of tea, and something to eat; and you must eat or you will be ill, and that will only make matters worse.' She left her niece and entering the sitting-room found Dr. Dashwood waiting to see her.

'Good evening, Mrs. Merryvale,' said the doctor.

'Miss Lindwood tells me Miss Kate is not well. Can I do anything for her? Will she see me?'

'Thank you, doctor; but I do not think Kate requires medical attendance. She has had a nervous attack that will pass away with rest.'

'Helena, my dear, will you please take a cup of tea to your sister, and a biscuit, and sit with her a little while? But don't excite her.'

Helena complied, and as soon as she left the room Aunt Merryvale turned to the doctor and said:

'Doctor, you have heard of the accident to last night's train?'

'I should think I have! I've been all day trying to find out if my friend Annesley is killed; and have not yet heard anything of him?'

'Did he leave town last night?'

'Yes. I thought I told you. He went in search of the Pearl. Left on the train that was wrecked; but whether he was on it at the time of the accident or not, I cannot tell; but I hope not. I think not, or I should have heard of him ere this.'

'I trust he is all right,' said Aunt Merryvale. 'There is trouble enough in this house as it is without having anything happen to him.'

'How? What?' said the doctor, in a tone of alarm, 'anything more than the loss of the golden-haired fairy?'

'Yes,' bending closer to him and speaking in a confidential tone. 'The Leslie whom Kate raved about in her illness was on that train, is badly hurt, and I want you to do me a kindness. Find out where he was taken to, and what are the prospects of his recovery. Leslie Hargrave, Esq., of C——. You will easily trace him.'

'Leslie Hargrave! did you say?' cried the doctor in amazement. 'Well, I believe I am getting bewildered.'

'He is the Pearl's father,' said Aunt Merryvale.'

'The Pearl's father!' repeated the doctor. 'Why, ma'am, that is contrary to the laws of nature. There must be a mistake somewhere; however, I'll see about it,' and the doctor took his leave, leaving Aunt Merryvale in doubt of his sanity.

Ten o'clock that night a boy arrived with a note for Mrs. Merryvale. It ran as follows:

'DEAR MADAM,—L. H., Esq., is progressing favourably. The Pearl is found and is with him. Yours truly,

'STEPHEN DASHWOOD.'

Aunt Merryvale immediately went to Kate's room, and finding her still awake, told her the news she had just received, concluding with, 'Now, my dear, go to sleep and all will be well.'

'Oh, I'm so glad,' cried Kate; 'so glad the Pearl is found, and is safe with her father. Surely she will be a comfort to him now and always.'

Aunt Merryvale sat beside her till she fell into a heavy sleep; then she left her and sought her own couch, muttering:

'A hard time this has been for a woman of my years; but it's fortunate I came here to live. A pretty pickle they would have been in without me. And now I suppose they'll both marry, and then what is to become of the old aunt? Well, it's only for a little while, and what matters it how I live so that I do my best.' And Aunt Merryvale fell asleep, the sweet sleep known only to those who spend their lives in trying to make others happy.







## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE EVE OF ALL HALLOWS—KATE LINDWOOD'S REFLECTIONS—'PAPA'S PEARL'—DR. AND CSELEY EXPLAINS—HELENA IS HAPPY.

THREE weeks passed since the account of the railway accident spread such horror throughout Beeborough. For days nothing was spoken of but the sudden death of the beautiful singer, and there was much marvelling how John Windermere bore the loss of his intended bride and her untimely fate; but John Windermere had left Beeborough, and none could tell whither he had gone; and how strange it was that the child that had been left two years ago at the Lindwood's, and was lately stolen, or supposed to be stolen, had never been heard of.

It was again the eve of All Hallows, and the family in the small house on Maple street were gathered round the fire, which blazed cheerfully, for it was a cold night, and the rain splashed in fitful gusts against the window panes.

Aunt Merryvale had fallen asleep in her chair. Helena was buried in a book, as was usual with her at this hour;

and Kate sat before the fire gazing in the shining coals, as she had done this night two years before, but with very different thoughts.

Two years before, this night, as she looked in the glowing grate, its brightness seemed to mock her ; her life was all in shadow ; her heart throbbing with a wild yearning for the love and companionship that she felt could never be hers. True, Leslie would always love her, that was her consolation ; but she could never see him again. All the longings of a woman for home and home affections, the tripping of tiny feet, the clasping of little hands, the cooing of soft voices, the kissing of baby lips, were strangled in her heart day by day, as she thought : ' These things are not for me. I must live out my life alone, but in the hereafter Leslie and I will walk hand in hand, for he is soul of my soul ; I am his and he is mine ; and nothing can come between us there.'

Then the Pearl was sent to her, and she accepted it as a gift direct from God to fill her lonely life, and hoped to bestow all the love with which her heart swelled for her imaginary children on this one ; but Kate was only human, and thoughts of the mother who had wronged her—who had deliberately taken all the fresh young joy out of her life—would come in between her and her love for the child, and she fancied momentarily that she should see the baleful light of the mother's eyes flash from the deep blue limpid orbs that were Leslie's very own, till she shrank from her at times with a feeling akin to aversion, which, babe though she was, was felt by the little one, who of late had shown a partiality for the society of Helena.

The consciousness of this feeling within her, which she had striven so ineffectually to conquer, and was more the result of a deranged nervous system than dislike for the mother, caused Kate the more acute suffering when the child could not be found.

Kate had a tender conscience, and felt that had the child left in her care, with the solemn request 'that she should be as a mother to her,' been as dear to her as she should have been, she would have been watched more carefully, and no harm could have come to her; and the thought of what Leslie would think of his trust betrayed, had been an ever present misery for the past few weeks. Now, all was changed; the Pearl was safe with her father, and he was recovering slowly but surely from his injuries.

In the first horror of the accident Kate had wished to go to him; but Mrs. Merryvale, with her strong common sense, interfered, and made arrangements to hear from the convalescent daily, and she was satisfied. And as she sat looking into the coals, a feeling of intense thankfulness, a great outpouring of the soul to the Giver of all good, for the peace of the present hour, welled from her heart. She did not dare to look into the future; she never again would in all her life to come. The present was blessed in being relieved from the misery that had oppressed her, and she was happy with the quiet happiness that is a part of the calm when the storm has passed.

She was roused from her reverie by the sound of feet upon the steps and a knock at the door, and as she rose to open it, she thought of the basket of autumn leaves two years before, and wondered what was coming. As before,

she flung the door wide open, in hope of catching sight of some retreating imp of darkness in the shape of the customary small boy, and was somewhat astonished to see Dr. Dashwood and his friend Annesley, and—joy of joys—the Pearl perched on his shoulder, her little form enveloped in a white fur coat, her yellow locks escaping from a blue velvet hood, her eyes dancing, her face lit up with baby smiles, as he lowered her from her elevated position into Kate's arms; and as Kate clasped the child to her bosom, the little arms crept round her neck, while a childish voice cried:

'Papa's Pearl, auntie.' Then, struggling out of her embrace, the infant toddled to Helena, who had risen to receive the visitors and again sat down, and stretching out her little hands, repeated:

'Papa's Pearl. Tate it up, Aunt Heena.'

And Helena took her on her knee, and they talked together as two who understood one another. Kate's face fell, while Annesley looked on with a radiant smile.

Dr. Dashwood moved uneasily, as though he wished to speak; and Aunt Merryvale, roused suddenly from her nap, looked round in a bewildered way, and her eye falling on the Pearl, she exclaimed:

'I told you so! Come back again sound as ever. Come here, my "blossom,"' she continued, 'come here to your old aunt; she thinks more of you than any of them.'

The Pearl did not move; she seemed quite satisfied with her present position.

'Well, now, I call that ungrateful,' cried the old lady, 'after all the punishments I have administered for her benefit. What an amount of dignity and stand-offishness

she has acquired since she has travelled and seen the world Miss Hargrave,' she continued, 'will you shake hands with me? That, at least, will not detract from your dignity.'

The little hand was placed in hers, and she held up her face to be kissed; but she would not be removed from Helena's knee.

'Mrs. Merryvale,' said Dr. Annesley, as the old lady ceased speaking, 'you are in error in calling the child Miss Hargrave.'

'How?' cried Aunt Merryvale. 'Is she not Leslie Hargrave's child?'

'Certainly; but her name is Annesley. Leslie Hargrave was my lawfully wedded wife. I lost her when Pearl was only four months old, and my friend here,' he continued, turning to Dr. Dashwood, 'who was with us when she died, brought my Pearl home with him, and left her on your step this night two years ago; left her in that way because he did not wish to give any account of her; and I can only say I thank you all heartily for your care of her.' He glanced at Helena as he spoke, and the colour deepened on her cheeks.

'Well, I must say, doctor, you were very sly,' said Mrs. Merryvale, turning to Dr. Dashwood, 'particularly when I told you she was the child of the Leslie Hargrave, who was injured by the collision of the trains.'

'I must say you bewildered me that night,' said the doctor; 'but I could not say anything. It was Annesley's business to explain.'

'But the likeness,' said Kate, who had listened to the foregoing explanation with mingled feelings of relief and

loss. Relief that the golden-haired, blue-eyed fairy was not Selina's child, and loss in that if she was not 'her Leslie's child.' What claim had she to her? She would be all Helena's now, for it was evident to all that Dr. Annesley loved her sister, and she was glad that it was so; still she felt the loss of Pearl, who, despite her mingled feelings of love and fear, she had always looked upon as her own, hers to train to a true and noble womanhood, and she could not at once reconcile herself to the change.

'I will explain the likeness,' said Annesley, but first let me tell you how I recovered my treasure.

'I engaged a policeman as you know to watch Madame Rolandi, thinking she had stolen my Pearl, but I was mistaken. The policeman heard words dropped which led him to believe the abductor was her companion, though madame was evidently aware of her proceedings.

'The night that Hargrave claimed his runaway wife, to save Windermere, the woman took fright and left madame, but in the darkness got on the same train, the policeman and myself following. She got off four stations from here at Elderslie, and we followed her, thus escaping the collision. We tracked her to the very house where she had placed my child for safe keeping, saying it was her own, that she was called away to see a sick friend and would come for it in a few days. She owned she had stolen the child because it was so beautiful, and she expected a large reward for finding it. In this she was mistaken as I did not offer a reward. Still the woman intended to keep her, for what reason I know not. The policeman took charge of her, but as I shall not appear against her when her trial comes on, she will be set free,

and I trust the fright she has had will be a lesson to her. I have got my jewel, and can afford to be lenient, though I have misgivings as to the propriety of my course ; she ought to be punished.'

'She ought, indeed,' said Aunt Merryvale.

'That night, or rather morning, for it must have been one o'clock, I spent with my child at the Russell House, not daring to lose sight of her. Early in the morning I heard of the accident, and that many of the wounded had been brought to Elderslie, and were now lying in the hospital, and there was a scarcity of medical attendants. I immediately offered my services and as I dared not leave my child I took her with me.

'The first patient I was called upon to attend was a very handsome man with a face that was strangely familiar to me. He was badly hurt, fever had set in, and he was partially delirious. I placed Pearl on the bed beside him while I set his leg, that was broken near the ankle, and raised some broken ribs that were pressing on his lungs. After this he breathed easier, and looking at Pearl, who was regarding my operations in a wondering way, he questioned : " Am I a boy again ? And is this my little cousin Leslie ?"

'Then I knew that the likeness that haunted me was a likeness to the mother of Pearl.'

'I asked him his name and he replied, " Leslie Hargrave."

'My wife had often spoken to me of the cousin Leslie, who was her playmate in childhood, though some years older than herself, and whom she had never seen since, as their parents lived far apart.



'I told him who I was and that Pearl was his little cousin, though not Leslie, and we shook hands and became friends on the spot. He was too ill then, poor fellow, to fully understand, and would call Pearl Leslie, and could not bear the child out of his sight. I have not left him since until to-day. A few days ago, when he was well enough to listen, I told him how I married Leslie against my uncle's wish. How we kept our marriage a secret, because I was his heir, and she was afraid he would disinherit me if he knew it. How I lost her after the birth of Pearl. How you, Miss Kate, took care of my baby, and then—'

He broke off suddenly with :

'Oh, Hargrave is a noble fellow, but it will be some time before he gets over the shock of the accident. That and a painful past have made him morbid, but all will come right in time.'

Kate understood him perfectly. Her heart ached for the man who thought himself unworthy of her ; but she made no sign.

'I have suggested travelling,' continued Annesley, 'when he is able to bear it. Until then I shall stay with him, leaving my babe here in her old home, if you will be good enough to be troubled with her.'

He spoke to Kate, but his eyes sought Helena's.

'We will gladly have her, if you are not afraid to trust us again,' said Kate, as she took the child in her arms, while the little sleepy head fell upon her shoulder. No more shrinking at thought of Selina ; and if she was not Leslie's child, she was his cousin, and that was something,



and Kate kissed the little face with a warmth of love she had never felt before.

Meantime Annesley moved to Helena's side, and while Dr. Dashwood and Mrs. Merryvale were having one of their customary, sharp-witted discussions, hurriedly whispered:

'Helena, you love my Pearl, will you care for her always? Will you let me write to you?' and as nobody appeared to be noticing them, he continued in a still lower tone, 'You must know how I love you, will you be my wife?'

Helena seemed like one in a dream. She made no verbal reply, but their hands met for a moment, and he was satisfied.





## CHAPTER XIX.

### UNITED AND REUNITED.

JAMES ANNESLEY and Helena Lindwood were married at Christmas. The wedding was a very quiet one, the only guests being Dr. and Mrs. Dashwood, and the banker and his wife, Aunt Merryvale making it a special request that Mrs. Beech be invited that she might see what a young and lovely bride Helena made at the age of thirty-two. And Mrs. Beech was compelled to acknowledge that she did look both young and pretty, but privately told Mr. Beech that 'she was wonderfully got up to look so well at her age, poor thing.' The happy pair went to Florida for their wedding trip, where for the sake of Helena's health, they spent the winter, leaving the Pearl with Kate and Aunt Merryvale, who became more and more attached to her the longer she was with them.

The following spring Annesley, with his wife, returned to Canada, and took up his abode at Cedar Bluff, near a small town on one of our great lakes. From thence he wrote, begging Aunt Merryvale and Kate to shut up their

house and bring the Pearl, and come and spend the summer with them.

Aunt Merryvale demurred, saying, she was 'too old to be dragging her bones about from place to place,' but as Kate would not leave her, she finally consented, and one day in the early part of June the family were reunited.

Dr. Annesley's residence stood upon a high bluff, surrounded by a luxurious growth of forest trees, through which vistas has been cut giving some magnificent views of the lake, and winding paths led to the pebbly beach.

Half way down there was a rustic seat sheltered from the sun by a clump of fir trees, and here Kate loved to sit and listen to the soothing murmur of the waves, as they met the shore with what sounded to her like words of endearment, or she would pace the strand in the raging storm, her hair dishevelled, her garments wet with the spray, exulting in the wild beauty of the scene, the war of the elements so tuned to harmony with her own restless spirit.

She could have borne the absence of Leslie anywhere better than at the lake shore. The voice of the waters is the voice of love and longing, and it speaks to the soul as no other voice of nature has power to do. It plays upon the heart-strings till they vibrate with intense pain; the soul thrills to the sound, as the whole being to the touch, when our hand in the moment of parting clasps the hand of one we love. Thus the yearning for the sound of his voice, the touch of his hand grew stronger day by day. In spirit he seemed so near her, that at times she thought she could stretch out her hand and touch him, so it was, that she was not at all startled, when one day as she sat

on her accustomed seat, she heard her name spoken softly, and looking down saw Leslie Hargrave leaning against a tree, some fifteen feet below, looking at her with a wistful expression in the deep blue eyes, through which Kate read the trouble in his soul.

'Always so far above me that I can never reach you,' he muttered.

'Not so, love, not so,' and Kate fluttered down and taking his hand led him up the steep bluff side.

They sat down and looked far out on the water, and for a few moments neither spoke. At last in a tone of deep feeling, he said,

'To what heights could I not attain with you by my side.'

'I am by your side now. Where shall we climb?'

'The upward way of life,' replied Leslie.

'Yes, onward and upward,' said Kate, rising as though ready to climb again.

Leslie rose also.

'Kate, will you put your hand in mine again, and forget I ever betrayed your trust?'

Kate placed her hand confidingly in his.

'Let us never speak of the past again, it has been very bitter to us both. Why recall it?'

'I thought you could never trust me again?'

'I have always trusted you.'

'What! when I deserted you,' cried Leslie in astonishment.

'You never deserted me; you could not. I always held my place in your heart; 'twas but a cloud that obscured me for a moment, let us not speak of it.'

'God bless you, my own love,' murmured Leslie. Again there was a pause while they looked dreamily upon the blue waters, and listened to the soft murmur as the waves kissed the shore, then slowly turning his glance upon her, he said wistfully,

'Kate, may I kiss you?'

She drew closer to him, and the kiss of pure true love was given and returned, then twining her white arms round his neck, she laid her cheek against his and said dreamily,

'Leslie, I'm so happy, so happy!'

Long they sat looking out upon the waters, till the full moon rose and flooded the wave with a glory of light.

'Look, Leslie! How beautiful!' cried Kate. 'Oh, I love the moon, she has been our soul's trysting place for years; see how she smiles upon us. Oh, I'm so happy! so happy!'

Leslie and Kate were married at the Episcopal church in S—— three months afterwards. The little fairy Pearl being the only bridesmaid.

Dr. Dashwood, who was invited by his friend, Annesley, to attend the ceremony, gave away the bride, and as he did so he muttered to himself—

'If I were not the husband of one wife and father of a family, I should find this the hardest day of my life. I never saw a woman on this blessed earth that I admired like Miss Kate: God keep Mrs. Dashwood from ever knowing it, though.'

On his return to Beeborough the doctor encountered Mrs. Beech, and told her the object of his visit to Cedar Bluff.

'Well, that is funny,' cried the little lady, excitedly; 'I always thought she was fond of John Windermere.'

‘My dear madam, no human being can see into the heart of another;’ and, thought he, ‘it is well in many cases that it is so.’

John Windermere never married. He died before he reached his thirtieth year, leaving a legacy to a brown-haired hazel-eyed Leslie Hargrave, the image of her mother and the pride of her father’s heart.

Aunt Merryvale, at their earnest request, made her home with the Hargraves at C——, on condition that she should never be asked to move again, as she said a woman of her age would not bear continual transplanting.

Helena had no children, but she wrapped all her motherly affection round the Pearl, who loved her step-mother with the most devoted affection, and here we will leave her to the delights of a happy childhood, a rarity in this age, where childhood is almost unknown, and in the future should any reader wish to know what became of the Pearl, we may give a sequel to the Mystery of Hallowe’en.

THE END.